

Committed Christian Life

# Prayer: Petition and Intercession



*But grow in the grace and knowledge  
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 3:18

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CBLT

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Prayer: Petition and Intercession</b> .....     | 3  |
| Introduction.....                                  | 5  |
| I. Biblical Examples for Prayer .....              | 7  |
| II. Principles of Prayer.....                      | 11 |
| III. Elements of Prayer .....                      | 16 |
| IV. Hindrances to Prayer .....                     | 22 |
| V. The Practice of Prayer .....                    | 23 |
| VI. Corporate Prayer .....                         | 31 |
| Conclusion .....                                   | 33 |
| <b>Appendix A. The Example of our Lord</b> .....   | 39 |
| <b>Appendix B. The Example of Paul</b> .....       | 42 |
| <b>Appendix C. Daily Fellowship with God</b> ..... | 44 |
| <b>Appendix D. Hindrances To Prayer</b> .....      | 46 |
| <b>Appendix E. Eternal Perspective</b> .....       | 51 |
| <b>Appendix F. Day of Prayer</b> .....             | 54 |

# Prayer: Petition and Intercession

# 5

*What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. ~E.M.Bounds<sup>1</sup>*

This lesson is taken from the course *Committed Christian Life*. There is another lesson “Prayer: Worship and Praise” which initiates the topic of prayer and lays the basis and focus from which all of our prayers can and should flow. We highly recommend that you do that lesson first, if you have not done so because it lays a foundation for our prayer lives. So often we only perceive of prayer as “asking”. It definitely is that but all too many Christians perceive of asking as being the **only** purpose of prayer. However when worship and praise are the basis of our prayers, then we change the emphasis from the problem to the power.

Other lessons in this course are:

- 1) “The Goal and Process of the Christian Life”  
Do you know what the goal is? Are you struggling to be a “good” Christian? Learn what God wants to do in and through you in this supernatural life we are called to.
- 2) “The Power for the Spiritual Life”  
Learn about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to unbelievers and believers and the three commands God’s Word gives us about the Holy Spirit.
- 3) “The War “  
We are in a spiritual battle with a determined enemy. Learn about the evil one’s tactics and how to be victorious.
- 4) “Prayer: Worship and Praise”  
Prayer is an expression of our relationship to God. Learn a fresh focus as you seek His face before you seek His hand.
- 6) “Alive and Powerful — The Word Of God”  
The Bible is our main source of communication from our Heavenly Father and the food of our spiritual lives. Learn how to make the most of this living, powerful resource.

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<sup>1</sup> Randall D. Roth, compiler. *Prayer Powerpoints* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995) 24.

- 7) “Walking By Faith”  
The foundational principle of Kingdom living is faith. Learn how to deal with the challenges to faith as well as steps to knowing God’s will for your life.
- 8) “Spiritual Transformation”  
What God has promised is that He will transform us by the power of His Holy Spirit so that we become like Him. This lesson will begin to answer the question: As a result of my walk with Christ, what changes in my character should take place?
- 9) “Understanding Suffering”  
Learn the five purposes of suffering and how our response to suffering will make or break us. We alone decide whether suffering will drive us to bitterness, or to spiritual maturity.
- 10) “Fellowship in the Family”  
Learn how to help build unity in the church, our “family”, how to deal with conflict and how to practice fellowship that honors Christ and brings joy to our hearts.
- 11) “Ministering To Your Fellowman”  
This lesson which will challenge you as to examine how you can serve others. It will open your eyes to why God has given you gifts from His Holy Spirit, and how important it is for you to minister to those around you.
- 12) “Redeeming The Time”  
What does the Bible say about work and how we should use our time? Do you know what your priorities are and do you set goals that reflect that? This lesson will help you redeem the time.
- 13) “Preparing for Revival”  
There is much talk about revival, but little evidence of it. Take a look at the history of revivals and the principles we can use to bring revival now, here—in our own lives, in our church, in Ukraine.

# Introduction

How important is prayer in your life? Is it something that only happens during an emergency? Is it something that you give priority to? You will have opportunity in this lesson to see what the Bible tells us about prayer and the importance it should have in our lives as committed followers of Jesus Christ. God has great power available to us. How are we going to receive that power—by direct contact with our Lord and Savior. Let's change the world through prayer!

As you do this lesson, for the greatest benefit to your spiritual journey right now, we recommend three things:

- 1) Keep a spiritual journal, at least while you work your way through this lesson. This should include people and needs you are praying for, answers God gives and where you are reading in your Bible and what God is teaching you.
- 2) Make a goal to have a daily quiet time with the Lord. If you are in a leadership position we would challenge you to set aside an hour a day for one month. However if you do not already have a regular quiet time, start with a daily goal that you are willing to practice for one month.
- 3) Memorize 4 Bible verses. We suggest you choose 4 verses from Hebrews 11—the famous chapter on faith.

Throughout this lesson there are various questions, exercises and assignments that will help you interact with the material and apply it to your own life situation. Note that at the end of this lesson there is an answer key so that you may check your understanding of the material covered.

Use a notebook to write out your answers to the exercises. This is your “thinking” notebook so that you can put down your own answers and thoughts on what you are learning. Our learning is reinforced by writing it down so this is an excellent tool as you pursue growth in your personal life.

## LESSON OUTLINE

- I. Biblical Examples of Prayer
  - A. Jesus
  - B. Paul
  - C. Daniel
- II. Principles of Prayer
  - A. Prayer is Dialogue with God
  - B. Prayer Is Based on Who God Is
  - C. Prayer Is Based on What Christ Has Done
  - D. Prayer is Learned
  - E. Prayer Is Commanded
  - F. Prayer Makes a Difference
  - G. Prayer Requires Commitment
- III. Elements of Prayer
  - A. Praise
  - B. Confession
  - C. Listening
  - D. Petition
  - E. Intercession
  - F. Thanksgiving



#### IV. Hindrances to Prayer

#### V. Practice of Prayer

A. Where

B. When

C. How

#### VI. Corporate Prayer

#### Conclusion

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson you should be able to:

1. Explain how various men in Scripture prayed and prayer's importance in their lives.
2. List and explain the seven principles of prayer in this lesson.
3. List the elements of prayer and the part each one has in our communication with God.
4. Explain what can hinder answers to our prayers.
5. Assess and plan to improve your own regular prayer time.
6. Explain the benefits of corporate prayer.
7. Spend a day in prayer.

### LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review the Lesson Outline and study the objectives.
2. Read the definitions of key terms.
3. Read this lesson and do the questions and exercises, referring to the Bible and the assigned readings as requested.
4. Reading assignments in this lesson:  
Appendix A — "The Example of Our Lord"  
Appendix B — "The Example of Paul"  
Appendix C — "Daily Fellowship with God"  
Appendix D — "Hindrances to Prayer"  
Appendix E — "Eternal Perspective"  
Appendix F — "A Day of Prayer"
5. Have a quiet time of one hour each day. If you have already kept a spiritual journal you will want to reexamine the lists that you have made in your journal and renew your commitment to pray for answers. You should also be seeking, both through exercises and on your own initiative, to add new dimensions to your prayer life.
6. Memorize four verses from Hebrews 11. If this is the first lesson you have done in the *Committed Christian Life* course, then start with the first 4 verses. If you have done other lessons, then continue from where you were memorizing.
7. Spend a whole day in prayer.

### DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**Importunity** — An insistent or pressing request; to ask with the determination to persist until an answer is received

**Intercession** — To make a plea on the behalf of another person

**Petition** — A request for something needed or desired; in this lesson we will use this term specifically to indicate personal requests for our own needs rather than requests on the behalf of others

**Supplication** — An earnest request made with a humble spirit

**Synergy** — The combined action of two or more that produces a greater total effect than the sum of their individual efforts

## I. Biblical Examples for Prayer

We are going to begin this lesson with some Biblical examples of prayer. There are many principles of prayer and many prayers written in the Bible for us to consider. But often it is the place of prayer exemplified in the lives of others that speaks the most strongly to our spirits.

We have chosen just three individuals to help us examine the place of prayer in our Christian lives. Jesus Christ is our primary example for our Christian living, and so what He did should impact our daily lives. Paul's life is set out for us in great detail and we have many of his personal writings to draw from. And finally, we will look briefly at Daniel who was known as a mighty man of prayer in the Old Testament.

### A. Jesus

Even though we are often told that Jesus Christ was a man just as we are and therefore always our example in how to live our lives, we tend to push “underground” some aspects of how He lived and moved among us, perhaps feeling that since He was God incarnate many of His actions do not relate to our personal lives. But one of the most striking priorities of His life was how much time He spent in prayer. And if we examine His life closely we can only question why we have such a low priority on prayer when His was so high. We could well think that as the Son of God He already knew what He should do and He already had all power. But the fact is that His life was melded with His Father's. That He not only felt the need to talk to His Father but that He longed to do that, that it was spontaneous in affection and relationship. And like all of us He looked to His Father for direction, for help, for intervention.



Take time now to read “The Example of our Lord” in Appendix A. This is taken from Andrew Murray's *The Prayer Life*.



#### Exercise 1

*After reading the appendix, make a list of all the incidents of prayer that the author mentions from the life of Christ including the Bible references. Not all incidents are referenced nor do they read the same in each Gospel. Luke is the author who emphasizes prayer in Jesus' life so look to that Gospel when there is no reference from the author. Take time to quickly read each incident of prayer from the Bible to refresh your memory. Now write a paragraph of what you have learned about prayer from this brief study on Christ's prayer life.*

There is much more to learn from Christ's prayer life but let these thoughts soak into your own personal life and return to His life for further studies in this area as your desire grows.

## B. Paul

Paul is a great Christian hero who had a fantastic impact on the world for the cause of Christ and the building of His church. For a man of action it is amazing how often he speaks of prayer and entreats others to pray. So often we think of prayer as being rather passive, or the last resort.



Read “The Example of Paul” in Appendix B, also a chapter from *The Prayer Life*. Then answer the questions which follow:



**Question 1** How frequent was Paul’s praying for the believers?

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**Question 2** Identify at least two general areas of concern for which Paul prays on behalf of the believers.

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**Question 3** Write out your own prayer based on Paul’s prayers and concerns that you can pray for your local congregation.

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**Question 4** If you use Paul’s life as a measuring stick, what importance should prayer play in the life of a church leader?

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Paul not only admonished the believers to pray, but asked specifically that they pray for him and his coworkers.



### Exercise 2

*Using the second section of verses in the above reading make a list of what to pray for and any other insights you find about prayer. Do you help others to see the importance of prayer? Do you pray for church leaders? If you are a leader do you ask the church to pray for your ministry?*

## C. Daniel

Now let’s move on to one more example of a life of prayer. To see how this works itself out in a practical way, let us stop and study the prayer of this man who prayed diligently, consistently and fervently, and who received answers from God.



## 1. His Habits

The background for Daniel's entrance into service in the Babylonian court is found in Daniel 1. We will look first at Daniel's life pattern and then examine one of his prayers.



Read the first chapter of Daniel to lay the basis for what kind of a man Daniel was. We need to see what kind of man he was to better understand his prayer life.



**Question 5** Based upon Daniel 1:8, what do you observe about Daniel's walk with the Lord, even though his actions probably put him in a life-threatening situation?

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Daniel was committed to purity and holiness, regardless of the cost. To see this even more clearly read Daniel 6:1-5.



### Exercise 3

*Examine your life in perspective of Daniel's.* Put yourself in the role of a non-Christian neighbor or co-worker. As he views your life, can he find any areas of your life that are inconsistent with your Christian testimony? What changes might be necessary to bring more purity and holiness into your daily life?

What are your daily prayer habits? Daniel was obviously a man committed to much prayer. He prayed regularly, three times a day. When confronted with a crisis situation, he gave himself to additional times of prayer and sought the prayer help of others (Daniel 2:17-18). He demonstrated a life of dependence upon God; and because of this dependence, he was used in mighty ways by God.

## 2. His Prayer

Daniel also had one other important habit. His life of prayer was continually linked with the searching of God's Word. Daniel saw the Word of God as a legacy for understanding and fulfilling God's purposes. Let us examine this in one of his prayers as we read Daniel 9.

As we review Daniel's prayer, we must remember that it is not a formula. It is not a prayer that he repeated over and over, nor one that consisted of the same elements each time he prayed. Consequently, it is not a prayer that we must necessarily imitate in form. However, it is the request of a humble and contrite spirit and definitely should be imitated in spirit. Let us consider seven characteristics of his prayer life as expressed in this specific prayer and then one result from it.

**Filtered through the Word.** Read verse 2. Daniel's prayer was partly a reaction to what he was reading in Scripture and a reaction to the circumstances. Note that he was reading the prophecies of Jeremiah. In this situation he was impressed with the intended length of Israel's desolation. Knowing that this time was drawing to a close, he was led to seek the Lord in prayer and supplication with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

Why this prophecy evoked such a response we are not told until later. We know, however, that his prayer was filtered through the reading of God's Word. This is important to note. The Word of God has a sanctifying effect on our prayers. It keeps us from asking amiss in relation to God's will. For example, it would have been useless for Daniel to pray and ask that God restore the city of Jerusalem in its fiftieth year of destruction, when seventy years of desolation had been decreed through Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 29:10). How often we ask amiss in relationship to God's will because we do not know His Word. The Bible aligns us with God's purposes for us and His Kingdom.

**Characterized by importunity.** Daniel 9:3 says that, when Daniel began to pray, he literally set his face unto the Lord. Though some would take this to mean that he turned toward Jerusalem to pray, this is an action that indicates he was determined to have an answer from the Lord. In

that determination, it is most likely that he did face Jerusalem, as was his normal habit. But with the destruction of the temple and the departure of the glory of God, it could no longer be said that God dwelt there. Daniel's desire was to have an answer. So he purposed to seek God through prayer that included intercession, supplication and earnest entreaty for mercy.

When you pray, do you have a real desire to obtain an answer from God? One way you can tell is by your vigilance after you have prayed. Ask yourself, Do I wait for the answer? Do I watch to see how God will answer?

**Accompanied by humility.** Daniel had set his face to seek the Lord. But, because his desire was of such great intensity, verse 3 says that he sought the Lord through fasting and the wearing of sackcloth and ashes. By so doing, he reinforced the importunity of his prayer. In addition, he outwardly declared his humility and unworthiness to approach God on any merit of his own.

Sackcloth was a rough cloth almost like burlap, woven from the long dark hair of the Oriental goat or the camel. It was used at times as a container for grain (Gen. 42:25). At other times it was used for saddlebags or bedding material. Primarily it was used for clothing and was the apparel of the poor, often worn by shepherds and prophets. It became the symbol of abject penitence.

The ashes were a sign of mourning and penitence. Since the word literally means "dust," it was often synonymous with worthlessness (Job 13:12). In cases of deep mourning or sorrow, ashes were sprinkled upon the head. Job's feelings of abject poverty, sorrow, and worthlessness were signified by his sitting upon a pile of ashes (Job 2:8).

We see here a man of great power and importance in the world who chose to physically show his humility before God as he prepared to intercede.

**Uttered in reverence.** Now refer to Daniel 9:4-12. Notice the tremendous reverence that Daniel has for God in this passage. Prayer is not a flippant pastime but an audience with our holy God. "Great and awesome God," said Daniel, "who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness with those who love Him." True reverence is love that responds according to the true character of the one whom it loves.

**Strengthened in confession.** Daniel was a righteous man. We know this because his enemies were unable to find any known sin with which to ensnare him. Yet Daniel was not absolved by this. Daniel had originally come into captivity because of the sin of Israel. He took on the identity of his people, his community, and recognized his share in the guilt. If God is to turn a deaf ear into a listening ear, we must acknowledge our guilt and our community's. When God is at work in our lives, confession becomes the norm. The more mature one becomes, the more sensitive he becomes to sin and the more heinous it appears to be.

**Asked on behalf of others.** In 9:13 Daniel began to make known why he was praying with such fervency and persistence. Reread verses 13-16.

Daniel realized that the seventy-year captivity of Jeremiah was almost over. Yet the people had not separated themselves from the ways that had originally prompted God to bring them into captivity. They had not turned from iniquity. They had given no attention to seeking God's truth nor obtaining His favor.

As a result, Daniel went to God in prayer, interceding for the people. He confessed his sin and the sin of the people and sought the favor of the Lord on their behalf. He asked that the reproach of Jerusalem be taken away. He petitioned that God's wrath be turned to compassion.

**Petitioned for God's glory.** Verses 9:17-19 form the completion of Daniel's prayer. Daniel had already made known his request. At this point his purpose was to petition God to give ear to the request he had made.

This brings up a practical question. This question needs to be pondered every time we pray. When you pray, can you beseech God to answer what you have asked? When you pray, do you believe He will answer because the glory of His name is at stake and because, if He did not answer, He would cause His name to be defamed? Read Exodus 32:9-14 and Numbers 14:11-19, and observe another man who prayed in this manner.

Now look at 1 Corinthians 10:31. Can you say that all your prayers are centered on the glory of God? One way to practically analyze this question is to ask, In prayer do I seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, or do I pray often to benefit my own pleasure and comfort?

**Answered in God's timing.** The result of Daniel's prayer was that God answered. Read now the Lord's answer in Daniel 9:20-27.

In effect, God answered Daniel's prayer indirectly. Instead of removing the reproach of Jerusalem, He granted Daniel insight into the extended decrees against Jerusalem. He let Daniel understand some of the eternal secrets that had not yet been revealed. In effect, God said, "I cannot totally bring about what you request now, but I will complete my purpose in the right time."

God's timing has a major effect on our prayer life. Not only does it affect our persistence in prayer, it effects how we perceive the answer. Although God begins to answer many of our prayers immediately, we sometimes think that He is not answering because from our perspective the answers are not visible. Read Exodus 2:23-25 for a good illustration of this.



**Question 6** Read Daniel 10:1-2, 12-13.

a) Daniel had been seeking the Lord with mourning and supplication for how long?

b) When did God actually begin to undertake to answer? \_\_\_\_\_

c) When did Daniel actually perceive the answer? \_\_\_\_\_

d) What did Daniel continue to do between his first asking and the actual arrival of the answer? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your response to indefinite periods of time when no answer seems to be forthcoming from God?

The prayer life of Daniel is an excellent example to us. With this scriptural background and example we will examine some of the principles of prayer.

## II. Principles of Prayer

Prayer is not necessarily an easy task however important we claim it to be. Many Christians are caught up in misconceptions about prayer that blind them to the truths about the power available to us. One pastor who is very active in prayer ministries has listed some myths which have hindered people from effectiveness in prayer:<sup>2</sup>

**Myth #1** God will not answer my prayers if there is sin in my life.

**Myth #2** Prayer is like an international phone call—distance is extreme, the connection is shaky, the rate is high and the number is hard to remember.

<sup>2</sup> Terry Teykl, *How to Pray After You've Kicked the Dog* (Muncie, IN: Prayer Point Press, 1999) 14-15.

**Myth #3** Some prayers are better than others.

**Myth #4** Prayer is crisis motivated.

**Myth #5** The main goal of prayer is to get God's attention.

**Myth #6** In order for my prayer life to be legitimate, it should look like someone else's.

**Myth #7** Prayer is a gift — some people have it, and some people don't.

As we look at the basic principles of prayer these myths should be dispelled with truths from Scripture.

## **A. Prayer is Dialogue with God**

We are all well aware of the fact that prayer is talking to God, but often we see it as a monologue and not a conversation. This is how we see prayer observed around the world, whatever the religion involved; it is within man to appeal to someone greater than he to resolve his problems. However, unique to Christianity, we see that it is God's desire to have fellowship with us, and fellowship indicates that prayer is a two-way street. It means that while we should talk, we should also listen.

One aspect of listening is opening the Word of God and listening to God's voice speaking specifically to our situation. We will discuss more about our time in the Word of God in the next lesson. But it is important, and helpful, to realize that this is part of our dialogue with God.

We also need to listen for His still small voice as He speaks into our hearts. In the Old Testament God sometimes interacted very directly with His people, e.g. Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11-15 or Job chapters 38-42. God seldom speaks audibly today (because we have such a rich resource in His written Word available to us now), but He does use a quiet voice in our minds and promises to guide and direct us (as we will discuss in a later lesson). And we must realize that part of this dialogue is also God's actual response to our prayers in answering our requests.

Our conversations with God should include times of enjoyment, basking in His love, showing love to Him, as well as pouring out our heart's concerns, and our listening to His heart's concerns. This approach to prayer will deepen our relationship, transform our lives, and increase our joy in the Christian life.

## **B. Prayer Is Based on Who God Is**

Prayer in itself possesses no power. The power is in the One to whom we pray. In the last lesson we talked about our knowledge of God and seeking to know Him better. We see in many of the prayers of the Bible that people started first with acknowledging who God was and His deeds before they made their requests. This thread of who God is runs throughout the prayer of Daniel which we have just studied. Obviously, the more we understand who God is, the power at His command, His feelings and desires for His children and for this world, the more we understand how and what to pray. Hebrews 11:6 says, "He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." What a great promise for us. The Bible teaches very clearly that God both hears and answers prayers.

And so, it is with the knowledge of who God is that we pray to Him in the faith which that knowledge produces. Prayer without a knowledge of God and the resulting faith in Him is a little like shooting arrows randomly into the air hoping that one of them will hit the target and bring results. We do not have to "shoot" our prayers off like that. We can have full confidence in the God of the Bible, His character and His deeds. Our confidence and faith will grow as we learn more of Him and actually experience His work and power in our own lives.

A Biblical illustration of a man who prayed with confidence in his God is found in 1 Kings 18:19-39. It is the story of Elijah and the God of Israel versus Baal and his 450 prophets.



**Question 7** What did Baal's prophets do in their prayers?

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**Question 8** What did Elijah do when he prayed?

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Elijah knew God, he knew exactly who he was praying to and he prayed in that confidence, as opposed to the other prophets who tried all kinds of things to get their god's attention.



**Question 9** Which kind of praying is closer to what you do—trying to get His attention or speaking to Him in confidence of who He is and what He wants?

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**Question 10** Read Hebrews 10:23. Who makes the promises and what is His reputation?

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The power of prayer is not the act of prayer but rather to **whom** we are praying.

### C. Prayer Is Based on What Christ Has Done

Christ died on the cross for a very specific purpose and that purpose was so our sins could be forgiven and we could stand, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, before the throne of God. The privilege we have of coming to God in prayer is not dependent on any goodness of our own. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).



**Question 11** Read Hebrews 10:19-22. What is the basis of our confidence to enter "the holy place", i.e. the presence of God?

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We are authorized to be Christ's representatives. When we stand before the throne, the Father recognizes us as persons who stand in the place of his Son. So we are acceptable.

Sometimes a believer may feel that he should not be asking God for anything, because he is unworthy. Some believers are troubled by sin even though they have asked for forgiveness. They still are convinced that God cannot answer their prayers because they are not "good enough". We will never be able to stand before God, for any reason, in our own worth. Our whole relationship to God is based on what Christ has done for us. Review Question 10 in Lesson 3 which lists many verses stating our position before God through Christ.



#### Exercise 4

*In your notebook list at least five verses that are most meaningful to you right now in remembering who you are before God. Use these as a focus during your next prayer time, thanking God, and reinforcing the authority Christ has given you.*

We come to God on the basis of Christ's merit. We have no claim on God, but Christ does. He merited the father's favor by his perfect life and sacrifice. We come on the ground of his claim on the Father. So it is because of what Christ has done for us that we have authority with God. Jesus



said that if we ask anything “in His name” we would receive it (John 15:16). This was not a special formula to include in our prayers but rather an acknowledgement of how we come before our Father. And yes, it also means that we are praying according to His will because we are walking with Him, abiding in Him, united with His purpose. It means that we can claim the victory that Christ won over Satan when He rose from the dead.

## **D. Prayer Is Learned**

Often we assume that a Christian will just know how to pray, and therefore we often have little prayer happening in the church. Praying is not an automatic response, nor is knowing how to pray rightly. Prayer is a learning process. So how do we learn to pray?

*First, by teaching.* We have an example in Jesus’ disciples who asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). That is why we are spending time in this lesson on prayer, so that we can learn how to pray, and how to pray more effectively.

*Second, by example.* We can learn much from the prayers of others. We have many prayers in the Bible to learn from, but it is also important to have someone who is a faithful prayer warrior to pray with us, to hear how they pray. We also benefit from being in a prayer group, hearing how others pray. Even hearing others stumble through prayers helps us to move on with more confidence in our own prayer life.

*Third, by practice.* Like many things in life it is by practice that we learn the most. Head knowledge does not help us pray. Praying helps us learn to pray. You cannot learn how to swim from a book. You have to get in the water. And so it is with prayer.

## **E. Prayer Is Commanded**

Prayer is a very necessary part of our spiritual life and therefore we are often admonished to pray, to ask:

- Pray all the time in the Spirit. Ephesians 6:18
- Pray constantly. 1 Thessalonians 5:17
- Let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6
- Ask, seek, knock. Matthew 7:7
- Ask and receive. John 16:24
- Men in every place should pray. 1 Timothy 2:8

So when you do not “feel” like praying, remember that if you give in to those feelings it is disobedience and will deaden your spiritual life.

## **F. Prayer Makes a Difference**

Some Christians take a very fatalistic view about the world and God’s sovereignty and feel “whatever will happen, will happen”. But we have very firm assurance from Scripture that our prayers are important, that they can change our lives, and they can change the world. We are co-laborers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9).

### **1. In my life**

Read the following quote from Andrew Murray concerning God’s will for us and how He desires to accomplish it:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/murray/prayer.XXIX.html>. Accessed Sept.28, 2009.



There is often great confusion as to the will of God. People think that what God wills must inevitably take place. This is by no means the case. God wills a great deal of blessing to His people, which never comes to them. He wills it most earnestly, but they do not will it, and it cannot come to them. This is the great mystery of man's creation with a free will, and also of the renewal of his will in redemption, that God has made the execution of His will, in many things, dependent on the will of man. Of God's will revealed in His promises, as much will be fulfilled as our faith accepts. Prayer is the power by which things come to pass which otherwise would not take place. And faith is the power by which it is decided how much of God's will shall be done in us. Once God reveals to a soul what He is willing to do for it, the responsibility for the execution of that will rests with us.

Some are afraid that this is putting too much power into the hands of man. But all power is put into the hands of man through Christ Jesus. The key of all prayer and all power is His, and when we learn to understand that He is just as much with us as with the Father, and that we are also just as much one with Him as He with the Father, we see how natural and right and safe it is that to those who abide in Him as He in the Father are given such power. It is Christ the Son who has the right to ask: it is through the abiding in Him and His abiding in us (a Divine reality of which we have little understanding) that His Spirit breathes in us what He wants to ask and obtain through us. We pray in His Name: the prayers are really ours as well as His.

Others fear that to believe that prayer has such power limits the liberty and love of God. Oh if we only knew how we are limiting His liberty and His love by not allowing Him to act how He chooses to act, now that He has taken us into fellowship with himself, through our prayers and our faith. Our prayers are like pipes which carry water from a mountain stream down to a town in the valley below. Water pipes do not make the water willing to flow down from the hills, nor did they give it the power of blessing and refreshment: this is its very nature. All they do is to decide its direction: to make it available to those in need. It is the very nature of God to love and to bless. Downward and ever downward His love longs to come with its quickening and refreshing streams. But He has left it to prayer to say where the blessing is to come. He has committed it to His believing people to bring the living water to the desert places: the will of God to bless is dependent upon the will of man to say where the blessing will come. "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

God chooses to work in our lives through prayer. We have many resources available to us, but they are not just automatically given to us, any more than salvation is automatically ours because Christ died to redeem us. We often cut ourselves short from what God wants to do in and through us because we are either caught up in trying to do it ourselves, or because we think God will automatically do these things if He wants to. Christ said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" Matthew 7:7. The Bible is full of God's promises to us, but we need to pray that they will be fulfilled in us.

## **2. In the world**

What is even more exciting than God's working in our personal lives through the power of prayer is the fact that we can have a community and world-wide influence through prayer. You can even stand beside a missionary in some foreign land through prayer. You can intercede for the lost in a remote area of the world through prayer. You can hold persecuted brothers in closed countries up before God. Through prayer you can make your influence felt around the world!

What is amazing is that it seems often God does not work unless someone is praying. Have you ever heard stories of someone awaking in the middle of the night feeling impelled to pray for someone, maybe someone even across the world from them? And later they discover that that person

was going through some crisis at that time of prayer. We will relate just one instance recorded by Christian leader and prayer warrior Wesley Duewel in his book *Touch the World Through Prayer*. In 1949 a group of retired missionaries were meeting to pray when they felt a need to urgently pray for a missionary serving in China. They prayed immediately and until they felt the burden lift. A few years later they met this man and asked if something had happened at that time. He related that on that day and hour he and some other missionaries were in front of a communist firing squad. Just as they were ready to shoot a high official entered and commanded them to stop and led all of them to safety.<sup>4</sup>

We are told in James 5:16 that “The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available (dynamic in its working)” (Amp). This is followed by a reference to Elijah’s prayers in 1 Kings 17 and 18. You can see many instances of God moving on behalf of the prayers of His people in Scripture. God has desires but He often waits for His people to pray. What power can be released through us!

## F. Prayer Requires Commitment

Never wait till you feel like it to pray. We seldom do feel like it. Prayer is “work” in the sense that we do not automatically do it. All of our relationships take “work” if we want to see them flourish. Prayer must become a discipline in our lives if we are going to benefit the way God desires us to. We can live our Christian lives just shooting up emergency prayers, or praying when we feel like it, but that means that prayer has no priority; therefore God has no priority. We must discipline ourselves in the area of prayer until it becomes a habit—a joyous habit, but a habit nevertheless.

Christ also taught us to be persistent in our requests to God. Again the indication is that this is going to take “work”. This is above and beyond what we feel like doing. In earlier days people used to talk about “storming the gates of heaven”. And Christ gave us a couple parables as examples. In view of the emphasis in Jesus’ teaching on prayer to God as our Father, His insistence on persistence may come as a surprise. Persistence may seem like being pushy or overbearing. The two parables on the subject are that of the insistent friend who comes in the middle of the night looking for bread (Luke 11:5-9), and that of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). These parables specifically teach perseverance. They certainly do not suggest that prayer forces a reluctant change in God. The Christian persists in prayer because he trusts, because he has faith (see Luke 18:8). He lays his life open to God on God’s terms in the utter conviction that God will act. But this is where we need an awareness that we are in spiritual battle. We saw how long Daniel had to pray before God was able to send an answer to him. And we observed Daniel’s importunity in prayer. So even though we do not understand all that goes on around us, we do need to hold on in prayer and not give up.



### Exercise 5

*Dispelling the myths.* Now that we have looked at the principles of prayer write out which principles apply to which myth listed at the beginning of this section and what is the specific truth that stands against the misconception.

## III. Elements of Prayer

We are now going to look at various elements that make up our communication with God. Some of these we have covered in Lesson “Prayer: Worship and Praise”, but include them here briefly so that you can see the whole picture.

<sup>4</sup> Wesley Duewel, *Touch the World Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 85.

## A. Praise

We have spent considerable time on praise in the previous lesson. It is revolutionary to prayer life to start every prayer with praise. It is “worship-based” prayer that keeps us in focus, not on ourselves but on the God whom we serve and is all of our resource.



Read Appendix C “Daily Fellowship with God” in *The Deeper Christian Life*. This is only a very short chapter but completes the picture of how we come before the Lord. Answer the following questions:



**Question 12** How does Murray recommend that you begin your prayer time?

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**Question 13** What does he suggest as the next step?

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**Question 14** Summarize points 4-9. How do they relate to praise?

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**Question 15** What is to be the keynote (the primary underlying theme) of our lives?

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You can see by this how starting with relishing in God’s presence and adoring Him leads us through steps which confirm our faith so that we can walk in faith and pray in faith.

## B. Confession

The topic of confession was also dealt with in the lesson “Prayer: Praise and Worship”. Now you have also seen from the appendix you just read how our times acknowledging and worshipping God will lead us to humility before Him. This is the place where we can allow God to examine our hearts so that we know there is no “static” between us. The fact is the more we mature in Christ the more conscious we become of our shortcomings and imperfections. Christ is a loving Lord and does not overwhelm us with everything at one time, but as we deal with different issues in our lives He will bring other things to mind that we need to deal with—the goal being our growth, not our condemnation. Confession before God is both purifying and refreshing as we cleanse these areas of our lives.

Always make sure that you are pure before the Lord. Pray with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me” (Psalm 139:23-24).

## C. Listening

Usually very little attention is given to listening when the topic of prayer is taught. We tend to emphasize our side of the conversation, giving little if any consideration to God's response. So let us consider for a few minutes God's part in this dialogue of prayer.

### 1. Scripture

God does speak to us, and in our modern age we can freely say that His most common means is the Scriptures which are so readily available all around the world. But how often do we think that reading the Bible is listening to God speak to us? The lesson "Alive and powerful — the Word of God" is about the Bible and our reading and studying of it, but do not overlook the fact that your Bible should be part of your conversation with God. You can talk to Him about what you are reading. You can ask Him to speak to your need as you read. And He will actually bring Scriptures to mind. All of this is God speaking directly to you, and many times responding to your prayer.

God can also use Scripture to "initiate" the conversation. So when you pick up your Bible, remember that it is part of God's conversation with you. Read your Bible with the awareness that you are listening to the words of His mouth. Stop at the first word, phrase, or thought that captures your attention and let the Father speak to you about it and let it shape your prayer response.

### 2. His voice

Many churches teach that God speaks ONLY through the Bible. However Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me." God told Isaiah "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:21). The indication is that communication will take place between God and His followers. As you grow in your prayer life and learn some listening skills, you will learn to discern God's voice.

### 3. How to Listen

Spend time with Him. If you want to listen and hear God's voice, you must be reading and memorizing Scripture constantly. Why? What God says to you will never violate Scripture. The more you know Scripture the more easily you can dismiss outside voices as not being from God because you will know what God's voice sounds like.

We need to regularly listen during our daily quiet time, but you may also want to add times of focusing just on listening. Here are a few simple steps that you can use to do this:

1. Ask God to search your heart as in Psalm 139:23-24.
2. Acknowledge His presence: pray something like, "I know that You are here with me right now".
3. Ask Jesus by His authority to forbid Satan from speaking or otherwise interfering in your time with God.
4. Ask God to speak to you as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for I am listening" (1 Samuel 3:10)
5. Wait in silence before Him (often difficult) with pen and paper so you may record what you are hearing.
6. Write down impressions that come to mind. Two questions you may use when listening to God:  
Lord, what do you want to say to me? Lord, how do you view me?
7. Follow up on what you heard from the Lord. He may speak to you about someone you have offended. Or He might whisper a kindness you could do for someone. Sometimes we are listening only for the earth shaking directions we would like to hear from Him and not the little daily things. As we obey He will speak more.

If your thoughts wander during this listening time, instead of trying to force them back into your preset agenda, try following them. Perhaps the Lord has another agenda. Or turn these things back to Him asking Him to deal with them or remind you later.

#### **4. Discerning His voice**

The biggest problem is discerning between God's voice, Satan's voice and the voice of our own flesh. You learn the difference by practice. Little Samuel had not heard God's voice before so he had to learn. But by the end of his life he was recognized as a prophet and spokesman for God.

#### **5. Principles**

Use these principles to help you discern from whom you are hearing. Satan can plant thoughts in our minds too. And sometimes our desires pick up on his suggestions and run completely against what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in us.

1. *Christ convicts; Satan condemns.* What are you hearing? Romans 8:1 tells us we have no condemnation, but Revelation 12:10 says Satan is the accuser of the brethren. God will never say you are worthless.
2. *Christ clarifies; Satan confuses.* He twists Scripture just as he did when he tempted Jesus. He is the deceiver. Pray that God will give you a sound mind and protect you from confusion as you listen for His voice.
3. *Christ confirms; Satan contradicts.* God never contradicts His Word, the Bible. Satan, however, will arrange circumstances to look like we are experiencing divine intervention in an attempt to blind us to contradictions to God's truth.
4. *Christ frees; Satan captures.* Satan loves to see us caught in a sin. He will put subtle thoughts into our hearts. "It's just a little thing." "It won't hurt just one time." Just little steps to do something which we know is contrary to Scripture. Christ however will point us to the truth and in that truth we will find freedom.
5. *Christ woos; Satan rebels.* God's voice will be constantly calling us forward, taking us deeper into our relationship with Him. It will compel us to seek truth. Satan's voice will attempt to put rebellious thoughts into our hearts. "Is that what God really said?"

Check your thoughts to see if they are put there by the Light of the World, or the prince of darkness. Usually a little objective examination will make it clear. You can always ask a mature believer to help you discern.

#### **D. Petitions**

In prayer terms "petition" means a personal request made for something needed or desired. Often early in our Christian life we ask for God to supply personal needs, and many of these He honors, even if they are simple or not very "spiritual", so that we will grow in faith. But sometimes later people stop asking, maybe because faith is flagging, or a fear that they are too self-focused, or not worthy. We need to remember that we have a caring heavenly Father, One who cares even about the little sparrow (Matthew 10:29). We also have an example in the Lord's prayer which says, "Give us today our daily bread" so we know that we can pray for our physical and material needs.

However, we should not limit our petitions just to the material. Make sure in your requests you include the spiritual blessings you know are God's will for you to have. Jesus said, "How much more will your Father in heaven give what is good to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11); and He was speaking in terms of the spiritual. A few suggestions:

- Fruit of the Spirit
- Christlikeness



- Spiritual blessings including grace, wisdom, power, holiness
- For God to work in areas of your life where you know there is sin or you are out of God's will
- For God to transform weaknesses in your character
- For protection from temptation
- For deliverance from evil

Do you want your life to amount to something for God? Then, if you are willing for an exciting ride, ask for God's blessings. ASK! Christ says to you as He did to one man so long ago, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Luke 18:41).

## E. Intercession

We have seen examples of intercession in the lives of Jesus, Paul and Daniel. Intercession means to make a plea on the behalf of another person. We appeal to God on behalf of a situation. As we have noted in the principles of prayer, our prayers do make a difference. God has chosen us to carry out His purposes here on earth. He wants us to care for His physical world here. He wants us to be full of good works towards others. He wants us to witness to others and carry His gospel to them. And He wants us to pray for His will to be done here on earth (Matthew 6:10). This is not just some kind of stamp of approval we are to give to God's plans. From all we see in Scripture, and from the many testimonies abounding today, we participate and release His power to work here on earth when we intercede.

We desperately need people who are committed to interceding. Our prayers literally can make the difference between winning and losing a battle. When we feel a burden to pray for something, we need to pray as though we were the only one praying. The wonderful thing is that anyone can be involved in this battle: the elderly, children, rich, poor, educated, uneducated. God makes no limits, except to pray with faith.

Perhaps you have given little thought to intercession. Here are a few helps to get started:

- Pick a few things outside your own needs and begin interceding.
- Start with areas or people that you feel some passion about. Then seek God how to pray for them.
- Ask people how you can pray specifically for them.
- Ask God for Scriptures you can pray for them or the situation.
- Keep lists in your Bible or in a journal.
- Write down specific requests in a journal with the date you started interceding and leave a space to record when it was answered.

These are just a few basic ideas to help you get started in intercession. The topics can be arranged differently and covered in different ways, but this is a beginning to help you develop your own intercessory prayer life. As you begin to develop your intercessory prayer life you will want to delve more deeply into some the following areas.

**For family.** This will include our spouse, children, parents and other relatives that you have concerns for. We would be remiss if we did not intercede regularly for our family. They are closer to us than anyone else and we undoubtedly are more aware of their needs than the needs of others. So make it a habit to pray regularly for your family, to pray with them about their needs, as well as to model prayer and encourage them in prayer.

### For fellow believers.

#### *Local*

This will include all the believers you know in your church or area, the leaders of your church, and other churches in your area.



### *Ministries*

There are many ministries of the church as well as ministries that are parallel and complementary to the church. In the church is the Sunday School, perhaps AWANA, Bible study groups, outreaches to alcoholics and addicts, prison ministries. Ministries outside the church that you are aware of might be Bible League, prayer ministries, mission organizations or individuals.

### *Nation-wide*

Look at the broad picture of what is happening within Christianity in the nation. This would not just include your denomination, but other churches and especially the leadership of the Body of Christ throughout the nation.

### *World-wide*

This is an area that is limitless. Watch for news items about Christians or other information you might receive. But you can also ask God to lay on your heart a specific country to pray for. Pray for missionaries that you know or that your church supports. Remember believers who are persecuted. Use Christian publications to learn more about other countries and ministries going on around the world.

### **For the lost.**

Individuals God has laid on your heart. If you are not praying for individuals, now is the time to begin! Choose at least three people and begin praying for their salvation.

There are evangelistic efforts going on around the world. You may know of some in your city or area, or in another country. You may also want to include new church plants and outreaches from your own church.

Spiritual awakening and revival is needed all around the world and is something that we can always pray for knowing that it is truly the will of God. You can pray for it to happen in your community, nation, and the world

**For governments.** Probably one of the least prayed for areas is government leaders, but Paul admonished us in 1 Timothy 2:2 to pray for them. This topic also includes local, national and world-wide leaders. We can pray for police, the military, judges. All of these are part of our governments and need intercession.

As you grow in prayer you may eventually find you have a calling to intercession itself. Some people have been called with a desire to pray for hours a day on behalf of others. If you sense God is calling you:

1. Find another intercessor to mentor you. Someone who will share with you their growth in this area.
2. Make sure you spend time in the Word. It will help you stay balanced. Never pray at length without an open Bible. Pray Scriptures.
3. Fuel your burden with truth. Find out facts. If it is a specific person, try to find out things you can pray about without being nosy. If you are praying for a country, learn everything you can about it. Look for news reports from there. The more factually-based our prayers are, the more effective.
4. Guard against a prideful spirit. You may start to feel more spiritual than others. Pride will destroy your ministry.
5. Develop your calling. Find out about other intercessors from history. Use different things to stimulate your prayer life, like maps, photos, Bible verses, quotes.



### Exercise 6

*Develop intercession in your prayer life.* You have a journal with at least seven pages set aside for prayer lists. Take time to look over these lists now. Have you been using them faithfully? Why or why not? Do you need to update some of the pages? Are you praying for unsaved people you personally know? If not, think about who you should be praying for and add at least three names of personal acquaintances in your journal, committing to pray for them regularly. You may put them under the appropriate topics, like “My Family” or “My Community”, but you also may want to develop a separate page for evangelism.

## F. Thanksgiving

This topic is listed last, but that is not necessarily where it should be during your prayer time. This is also a topic that was covered in the lesson about worship and praise. Nothing lifts the heart like dwelling on the blessings that we have from God. Specifically we need to always remember to thank God for His answers to our prayers. Sometimes the prayer itself is long forgotten, or the answer is just taken for granted by the time we receive it. God forbid that we should be like the nine lepers who ran off, joyful, but forgetful of who had transformed their lives from illness to wholeness (Luke 17:12-18).

# IV. Hindrances to Prayer

Often questions about prayer center around why they are not answered. Or at least why they do not seem to be answered. The Bible does give us some warnings to check.



Read “Hindrances to Prayer” in Appendix D. After reading it answer the following question:



**Question 16** List the seven hindrances to prayer as listed in the article and supporting Bible references for each one.

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### Exercise 7

*Spend time in prayer right now* (after reading the appendix) and ask God to bring to mind any hindrances to prayer you have in your life. If you have thoughts that pop into your mind, write them down immediately. It is possible that even though God makes you aware of them, you are not yet ready to repent and make them right. It is important to begin by recognizing where we fall short. You need to write down the personal specifics, not just the general topic. Be honest with yourself.

# V. The Practice of Prayer

Actually prayer is quite simple and can take place anywhere, any time, with many different expressions and forms. More than anything else it is important to actually do it! However, it is helpful for us to examine and then improve our prayer life. There is always room to learn and grow.

## A. Where

First there is the matter of where we should pray. We have examples from the Bible of people praying in places as diverse as the Temple to the fiery furnace. But here we wish to focus on the regular habit of prayer we need to develop as a daily part of our life. There is nothing that can help us more than finding a definite place to pray.

*Did you ever say anything like this to yourself, "It is so difficult to select a place?" What about the time when you were in love, was it impossible to select a place to meet? No, it was far from impossible; and beware of self-indulgence. Think how long our Lord has waited for you; you have seen Him in your visions, now pray to Him; get a place, not a mood, but a definite material place and resort to it constantly, and pray to God as His Spirit in you will help you. ... Do not say, "If I only had so and so;" you have not got so and so; but we can always do what we want to do if our want to do it is sufficient.<sup>5</sup>*

If you have not found a regular place of prayer yet, seek one, preferably the same place every day. Places can be as diverse as your situation, from the kitchen table to a park bench. Seek out a place that gives you as much privacy as possible.

## B. When

Closely related to the place you regularly pray will be the "when".

### 1. Daily

We have already seen the example of Daniel in daily prayer, even in the face of persecution. Set a time for daily prayer if you have not already done so. Consider it an unbreakable commitment. Strive to let your scheduled prayer time be the centerpiece of your day: arrange everything else to fit around it. You must begin by trying to find a time that will have the least cause for interruption. We see this in the life of Christ: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). Many of the great heroes of the faith have given this early morning priority to prayer. If you have not been doing so, try giving God the first fruits of your day. For one week, give the very first 60 minutes of your day to prayer. Our priority reflects our passion. We need to examine our hearts if we have no desire to order our day to begin in His Presence.

### 2. A continuing attitude

First Thessalonians 5:17 states that we should pray without ceasing, all the time. This refers directly to the fellowship that we are to have with God, with the acknowledgement of His ongoing presence with us.

*It was said of the late C. H. Spurgeon, that he glided from laughter to prayer with the naturalness of one who lived in both elements. With him the habit of prayer was free and unfettered. His life was not divided into compartments, the one shut off from the other with a rigid exclusiveness that barred all intercommunication. He lived in constant fellowship*

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<sup>5</sup> Oswald Chambers, *Prayer: A Holy Occupation* (Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992) 50.

*with his Father in Heaven. He was ever in touch with God, and thus it was as natural for him to pray as it was for him to breathe.*<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Time and occasions

This section includes not only “when” but “how much”. We have tried to spur you on to closer communion with God by requiring an hour a day spent as a quiet time with God, both praying and being immersed in His Word. Long hours of prayer are evident in the lives of many mighty men of God. These men understood that “much time spent with God is the secret of all successful praying. Prayer which is felt as a mighty force is the result of much time spent with God.”<sup>7</sup>

John Wesley, who began a revival movement that revolutionized Great Britain, was a man of prayer devoting two hours a day starting at four in the morning. Martin Luther, the great Reformation leader, said he had so much to do that he needed to spend three hours in prayer a day. These were men who brought dramatic changes to the world.

In addition these men spent longer periods of time in prayer on occasion. When we have times of heavy burdens on our hearts we need to seek extra prayer time. We will address how to have a whole day of prayer in the next section. But some people set aside even longer periods of time devoted to prayer, not necessarily praying all the time, but using fasting as a way of maintaining an attitude of prayer even when regular work must be done. We will also address the issue of fasting in the next section.



#### Exercise 8

*Examine your priority of prayer.* How would making prayer a more important priority change your life? Look at the following possibilities and consider which benefits might be yours.

- Add more joy to my life
- Bring more peace of mind
- Heighten my effectiveness in my work
- Increase the quality of my relationship with God
- Give me a better perspective on my circumstances
- Put me in touch with the resources and power of God
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*The men who have done the most for God in this world have been those who have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking Him the rest of the day.*  
~~E.M. Bounds<sup>8</sup>

## C. How

### 1. Kingdom Praying

When we come to the how of praying we need to examine the focus of our prayer time. It is easy to become discouraged in prayer and for it to deteriorate into a duty of praying through a list, or putting in a certain amount of time to soothe our conscience without looking to see why we feel

<sup>6</sup> E.M.Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bounds/purpose.IV.html>. Accessed April 20, 2009

<sup>7</sup> E.M.Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bounds/power.VII.html>. Accessed April 18, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Roth 18.

apathetic. There is a problem if we have minimal interest or passion in our prayer times. So first we will look at the concept of “kingdom” praying.



Read “Eternal Perspective” in Appendix E, then answer the following questions.

**Question 17** How does the author define kingdom prayer?

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**Question 18** How did Paul pray for the Roman church which was undoubtedly suffering persecution?

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**Question 19** What would have been the obvious to pray for this persecuted church?

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**Question 20** How would Paul’s prayer benefit the kingdom of God?

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**Question 21** According to the author what was the common thread in Paul’s prayers for the churches.

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How often this is true in our own lives. We are so focused on what we want to happen, we ignore the fact that there is a process involved. And often we are so caught up in getting release from trouble that we do not think about what process God might want to take us, or others, through for spiritual growth in our lives and building up of His own kingdom.



### Exercise 9

*Learning how to pray kingdom prayers.* Choose a problem that you have been praying about for yourself or someone else. Write it down and then examine how you have been praying about it? What was your goal? What did you think was important? How can you pray so that your prayers will have an eternal perspective? Is there is a spiritual process you can pray for? How is God’s glory involved in your prayer? Do the majority of your intercession and petition revolve around asking for God’s kingdom to come or do you mostly pray for others’ needs? Be prepared to discuss this at the group meeting.

## 2. Praying Scripture

Actually using the words of Scripture to pray can bring encouragement, direction and richness to our prayer life. There are no right and wrong ways to do this, but here are a few easy methods.

- 1) *Personalize verses.* You can just incorporate scriptural thoughts and phrases into your prayers. Colossians 1:9-11: “Father, fill Sasha with your Spirit. Cause him to bear fruit in every good work as he grows in his knowledge of you. Strengthen him so he might have endurance and patience for what is ahead in his ministry.”
- 2) *Proclaim God’s Word.* Pastors do this sometimes when they close a service using verses like Jude 24-25 and proclaiming them as true over a congregation: “To him who is able to keep



you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior, be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”

- 3) *Find a promise.* Seek God for a promise in a given situation. Then claim this truth for the situation. Repeat it in your prayer. Mighty men, both in the Bible and in history, have done this.
- 4) *Use a Biblical prayer as a model.* The easiest example of this would be the Lord’s prayer. However, this is not a matter of memorizing and repeating it but of changing it to reflect your own thoughts and needs.

### 3. Prayer Walking

Prayer walking in its simplest form is walking and talking with God out in the world rather than in the comfort and seclusion of our home or church. The purpose is to be where the people are, to try to see them through God’s eyes, and to intercede for them, including blessing them in the name of the Lord. It is moving out to claim territory for the Kingdom of Christ, right on Satan’s ground.

#### Steps to basic prayerwalking:

1. *Start simple.* Wear comfortable shoes. Use clothing appropriate for the weather that day. Carry a small pocket testament or Bible. Some people like to carry a small notebook and pen so as to take notes on what the Lord teaches you. If you are a loner, go alone. If you are a people person then go with a friend with whom you can pray out loud together without feeling inhibited or embarrassed.
2. *Start with a plan.* Plan where you will walk to, by what route, and for how long. It may be around several blocks in your neighborhood or you may choose to go to a different part of town, or even another town or village.
3. *Start with a reasonable time period.* Begin with 20 minutes if you have not done this before. There is no speed requirement. Walk at the pace that is comfortable for you. However over time you will want to increase to 45 minutes or an hour just so you can cover more area.
4. *Walk and pray:*
  - a. With open eyes for insight — be responsive and aware of people and places around you; look through Christ’s eyes.
  - b. With Jesus; talk with Him about what you see and feel; be sensitive to His guidance.
  - c. Sometimes in silence -- listening is half the conversation.
  - d. With scripture — blessing and making requests God’s way.
  - e. With relevance -- pray for what you see as you walk.

This is only a brief introduction to prayer walking but many churches schedule events and try to cover their whole city with prayer by their members walking and praying on every street. Some individuals regularly walk in their own neighborhoods or the area around their church to pray for people and that God be revealed to them. Some people even travel to other countries with the express purpose of praying in a place for a day or even a week before evangelistic or church planting efforts.

### 4. Fasting

Fasting in the Bible is always linked with prayer and humility, but not all prayer expresses itself through fasting nor is fasting the only way to show humility. By definition, fasting is total absti-



nence from food.<sup>9</sup> By comparing at least three passages--Isaiah 58:3, Psalm 35:13, and Leviticus 16:29--we can discover some basic truths about fasting.

First, Isaiah 58:3 makes fasting parallel with the expression, "to humble oneself". This is expressed explicitly in Psalm 35:13 and implicitly in Leviticus 16:29. Secondly, fasting is an act of submission to God. Thirdly, the Hebrew word translated "humble oneself" comes from the word with the fundamental meaning "to afflict". So fasting is an act of self-denial. It is not self-denial because you choose to devote yourself to it but self-denial because your heart has been humbled under the circumstances to do so (Matthew 9:14-15).

Consequently, fasting in the Bible is associated with anticipation of spiritual conflict and testing (Matthew 4:2f.); in the act of worship (Luke 2:37); when facing crisis (Esther 4:13-16); in deep personal sorrow (2 Samuel 12:16-23); in selecting key leaders within the local church (Acts 14:23); when seeking God's will (Acts 9:9); when selecting who should be sent out from the church (Acts 13:1-3); while seeking the return of God's blessing after times of great personal, group, or national sin (Nehemiah 1:4); when desiring protection (2 Chronicles 20:3-4); and in approaching God in humility and dedication (Psalm 69:10-13). As such the length of the fast depends on the person, the circumstances, and the need.

Because fasting is not commanded except for the Day of Atonement (which has been fulfilled by Christ), we are not under obligation to fast. It is personal, spontaneous, and voluntary. However, fasting has had a very significant place in the history of the church.

*Fasting was a powerful God-blessed strategy of the early church, and in the lives of many of the leaders God raised up. Paul prayed with fasting in every church (Acts 14:23).*

*Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (born A.D. 315), wrote: "Who does not know that the fasts of the fourth and sixth days of the week are observed by Christians throughout the world?" In the thirteenth century, Francis of Assisi went through the streets of Italy singing, preaching, testifying, praying, and fasting until thousands of youth were saved. Martin Luther was criticized for too much fasting. John Calvin fasted and prayed till most all of Geneva was converted, and there was not a house without at least one praying person. John Knox fasted and prayed until Queen Mary said she feared his prayers more than all the armies of Scotland. Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, in fact, most of the reformers, were known for their fasting added to their prayer.<sup>10</sup>*

## **Different Types of Fasts**

If you keep in mind that the purpose of fasting is to show humility and to enforce our prayers then fasting can take different forms. Consider the following:

*The Absolute Fast.* Abstaining from solids and liquids except water.

*The Partial Fast.* Abstaining from certain foods (such as meat) or abstaining from all foods for a portion of the day.

*John Wesley Fast.* Eating only bread and drinking only water for a chosen period of time.

*The Jewish Fast.* Abstaining from food from sundown to sundown (24 hours).

*Liquid Fast.* Abstaining from solid food but allowing for liquids, such as fruit juice.

*Media Fast.* A fast that involves abstaining from exposure to the media, especially TV.

*Telephone Fast.* A fast that involves abstaining from the use of the telephone.

<sup>9</sup> Greek, **nesteia** from **ne**, a negative prefix and **esthio**, "to eat."

<sup>10</sup> Duewel, 95-96.



## Question 22 What did Christ say about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18?

Remember this when you decide when and how to fast. You are not to do this to impress people with how spiritual you are. This is between you and God.

### Steps for fasting

Here are just a few simple steps to help you:

- 1) Decide on an objective.  
Why do you want to fast? Is it a desire to draw closer to God? Are you seeking healing for yourself or someone else? Seeking revival? Is it to be a special time of intercession?
- 2) Make a commitment.  
Choose what form of fasting you will do and for how long of a period of time. If you consider longer than a 3-day liquid fast be cautious in your eating habits the day before your fast and when you resume eating.
- 3) Make a schedule.  
Start your time of fasting with praise and worship, then follow with confession before the Lord. Decide how much time and when you will pray. The more time you can devote solely to being with the Lord the more meaningful your time will be. However that will be dependent on your circumstances and length and type of fast.
- 4) Expect results.  
Look to the Lord to use this fast in your life to draw you closer to Him, help you see His perspective, and answer prayer according to His will and desires.



### Exercise 10

*Try fasting.* Taking the above information into consideration plan on a 24-hour fast within the next month. (If you have special health conditions use common sense and caution. You might need to consult a doctor.) Use the four steps listed, writing them in your notebook. Write down an evaluation of your experience at the end of the fast.

## 5. One Hour of Prayer

In the time of Jesus' greatest need His disciples failed Him. We can hear his plaintive cry, "You could not keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matthew 26:40). And then he said "...the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (v.41). We probably have all felt that. Yes, we are willing, we want to—but it is so hard!

We are going to give you a schedule to pray for one hour in five-minute increments that may help you to break through so that the benefits to the spirit will overcome the unwillingness of mind and body. There are many similar plans but we suggest you use this one and then develop your own plan based on what works for you. The plan is to spend five minutes on each point praying consecutively according the following schedule:

### 1. Praise

Start your time with praising God, focusing especially on His names. There is an appendix from the lesson "Prayer: Worship and Praise" with the names and attributes of God which you can use. Try to not use "I" or "me" during this time.

**2. Be quiet**

Quiet yourself totally before the Lord; wait on Him. Let Him fill your heart and mind with wonder and worship over who He is. Refrain from “speaking”. Keep opening your ears to listen for His voice.

**3. Confession**

Now is the time to ask the Lord to search your heart and reveal any hidden sin, any short-coming. If nothing comes to mind, just maintain quiet and keep asking the Lord to shine the light of His word on your heart. Seek purity.

**4. Read the Word**

This is again actually a listening time when you look in the Bible specifically to hear what God has to say to you today, right now, for your own situation. You may choose to read a portion that is a continuation from your regular reading plan, or some other passage that the Lord leads you to. But think carefully as you read and ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart to hear His voice.

**5. Intercession**

No, five minutes is not very long to intercede! But limit yourself to that right now. Pray especially for what is on your heart at the moment in concerns for others.

**6. Petition**

Now just five minutes for your own needs. This may be physical and/or material, but also is for spiritual areas of need in your life or ministry.

**7. Pray the Word of God**

Now you can use either a portion from what you have already read in the Bible or just continue your reading and personalize what you read and pray it back to God.

**8. Thanksgiving**

Let your heart fill with thanksgiving now. Remember answers to prayers first, and then all the other benefits you have from the Lord. Remember to thank Him for all things—even the troubles and difficulties (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

**9. Singing**

It does not matter how well you sing, this is for the Lord. The purpose is to sing to Him rather than about Him. So as you choose a song or songs, change the words to address Him directly if necessary. Sing in an attitude of praise and thanksgiving.

**10. Memorization/Meditation**

If you are not in a plan of regular memorization, choose a verse and memorize it and meditate on it. This is again a time for God to speak to your heart through His Word.

**11. Listening**

Now you are drawing close to the end of your hour of prayer and it is time to listen again for God’s voice, for direction that He has for you, for encouragement, for rebuke. Have your notebook and pen ready so you can write whatever thoughts come to mind.

**12 Praise**

Spend your last five minutes again in praise, in joy, in adoration, in relishing the presence of God in your life.

It is very helpful if you have a timer that you can set for five minutes so that you do not have to keep looking at the clock. Looking at the clock interrupts your concentration. However, if that is necessary, do that. You will be surprised how quickly the time goes on some parts, and how long

it seems with other parts. But at the end you will also be amazed at how easy it was to pray for an hour when you use such a variety of elements.

As you evaluate what is happening in this hour of prayer answer the following questions:



**Question 23** What percentage of the time is spent on listening to God?

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**Question 24** What percentage of the time is spent on worship?

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These are the two areas that often get the least amount of time, no matter what period of time we have set aside for praying, but we can only benefit by spending more time listening to God and more time praising Him.



### Exercise 11

*Spend one hour in prayer this week using the above plan. In your notebook write down the 12 points to the plan, then decide which day would be best to do this and at what time. You might do it during your regular quiet time, but it needs to be one hour all at one time, not divided up during the day. Write a paragraph afterwards on what you learned about prayer and yourself during this exercise.*

This is not the perfect plan, nor the only plan. It is one plan that gives us new challenges and helps us reevaluate our prayer lives.

## 6. A Day of Prayer

Now we move to a bigger challenge, spending a whole day in prayer. As you consider a day of prayer you need to think through how you can do this. It brings us back to the basic questions.

### When

This is not just a matter of when would be best for you to do this, but also how often. Obviously, you will have to consider your work schedule and other commitments. You may choose to take a national holiday as an opportunity. It is wise to make a priority for extended periods of time with God in prayer — both for personal direction and evaluation and for intercession. If you have not done this before, start with a plan to do it once a year. As you gain experience in the joy and strength a day with God brings, you will want to try to schedule it more frequently. If you are a pastor or ministry leader, it should be a priority for you at least quarterly.

### Where

The next issue is to find a place where you can do this. It is important to find a solitary place away from people and distractions. If it is a time of year when the weather is mild you may want to go to the forest or someplace outdoors. Perhaps someone who works a full day could give you the key to their apartment for one day to be alone. Another opportunity would be to ask for permission to be in a room at the church. Explore possibilities and think creatively. As you think about the “where”, remember that part of finding a quiet place for yourself is removing yourself from easy access to other people. That means you need to turn off your cell phone, unplug any other phones and turn off the computer. It doesn’t mean you cannot check your phone once or twice if you are anticipating a call or that you cannot check in with your family, but keep in mind that you are setting this time aside to be with God and make Him the priority.

## How

In Appendix F you will find a schedule for an 8-hour day of prayer. This is a guideline that you can use to have a fruitful time with God and fix your focus. You may decide to use another plan, but do have a plan laid out so that you will know what you want to do.

You may want to plan a day of prayer by yourself or with other people—family members, a church leadership team, a Bible study group, or you may just want to do it with a prayer partner. There is encouragement in planning this together, even if you spend the day separately in prayer. You will notice in the schedule we recommend that if others are with you the last hour you spend in a time of praise and prayerful evaluation together.

During your day of prayer feel free to change positions: kneeling, standing, walking, bowing, prostrate, head bowed, eyes lifted up, hands lifted up. Body expression in prayer will keep you focused and fresher. Also feel free to use your Bible to listen to God or to pray Scriptures. Speak out loud sometimes. Other times you can write out prayers. Write out thoughts that the Spirit brings to mind. Do not think of this as a rigid time in which all you can do is kneel and try to keep moving from topic to topic. Remember that you are communicating with Someone who enjoys hearing you and enjoys being with you. Sometimes you may just need to stop and enjoy!

## VI. Corporate Prayer

This lesson has been focused on the prayer of the individual but we do need to mention the importance of corporate prayer before we close. The book of Acts shows the early church engaging in group prayer. There is a definite example for us and some interesting promises from Christ in relation to this.

There is an overall principle exhibited in life called synergy. Synergy is when the result is greater than the sum of the parts. A negative example would be lung cancer. Smoking causes lung cancer. Breathing asbestos also causes lung cancer. If a person does both of those the rate of risk is much higher than the sum of the rate of smoking and asbestos added together. If you are referring to people then synergy becomes the combined action of two or more that produces a greater total effect than the sum of their individual efforts. The Bible mentions this in a couple different places.



**Question 25** Read Leviticus 26:7-8. If five people fought together, how many enemies could they chase? If one hundred fought together, how many would they chase? Do some math. Where would a person have a greater effect, by himself, in a group of five, or in a group of one hundred?

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God was saying — If you'll fight together, I'll multiply your ability to overcome your enemies.



**Question 26** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. a) What are the advantages of two together? b) What is the advantage of three strands together?

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So we see that there is help, encouragement, and greater success against an enemy when two are together. And all of us can understand how the strength of a cord increases when it has more strands. So as we work together, and even more importantly pray together, we increase our effectiveness against the enemy. And we also encourage each other in our relationship with God as we do this corporately.

Then we see in the New Testament what Christ had to say to us: “If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Matthew 18:19,20). It does not require a large group to see the Father’s answers. But what does it require?

**Proximity.** Jesus said, “For where two or three gathered together”. The word “together” implies physical connection. We gather together in the same place, whether that is the church building, an apartment, or any other place.

**Unity.** God said, “If as one people . . . they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6). Unity enables. Jesus said, “A house divided against itself will fall” (Luke 11:17). Disunity destroys. We need to be united in purpose when we pray in a group. People who have been arguing or holding grudges against each other will block unity. Those who are not united in the purpose of meeting together in prayer will experience little results. A kingdom focus as we discussed earlier is very helpful in a corporate prayer time. We are not seeking personal benefits from a prayer time but rather focusing on the greater glory of God and His kingdom.

**Agreement.** Christ said, “If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven” (Mt. 18:19). Notice that He does not suggest that we will agree about everything. We cannot agree on every issue. But there are plenty of things we do agree on--and those are what we can pray about together. We will also note here that in our modern day and age we have ways of connecting that have not existed in previous centuries. We can pray together on the telephone or in a chat room. And we can quickly be together in agreement as part of a prayer chain organized through phone calls, SMS’s or emails.

**Clarity.** When praying in a group we cannot agree in prayer about something we cannot hear. This was Paul’s concern about the use of tongues in the corporate setting: “How can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say ‘Amen’ to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying?” (1 Corinthians 14:6,16). In order to truly pray in “one accord” (Acts 4:24, KJV), it’s important to pray aloud and clearly. This means in a larger group situation people should be encouraged to speak up so that all can hear them. Otherwise we lose the power of agreement. This is usually less of a problem when we receive written prayer requests or telephone prayer requests, but we also need to state the issue clearly enough for others to join in.

**Brevity.** Generally speaking, corporate prayers (unlike private prayers) should be concise and to the point. There is no need to spend time explaining things to God; He already knows. You also lose the agreement of the group when a prayer goes on for a long time and covers a broad range of topics rather than focusing on one or two items. One way to encourage brevity and participation is to use conversational prayer where the group focuses on short prayers by several individuals concerning one topic. This also helps those shy or inexperienced in prayer to participate.

We have much to benefit in praying together because of Christ’s explicit promise to us. So take opportunities to pray with a prayer partner, with your family, with prayer groups or teams who meet for that specific purpose at specific times. Your own prayer life will be strengthened and encouraged, and your efforts in prayer multiplied by uniting with others.



### Exercise 12

*Evaluate corporate prayer in your life and in your church.* How often do you meet to pray with others? When and how frequently? What opportunities does your church give for you to participate in corporate prayer? Do you need to take the initiative and start a prayer group? If so where, when and with whom should you do that?



# Conclusion

We have not mentioned the topic of warfare prayer which is popular in some Christian circles. We need to be aware that every time we spend time in prayer, it is warfare. When we pray it is against the resistance of Satan as he fights our relationship to God. And most of the prayers we offer up are an assault against Satan, especially if they are “kingdom” prayers. Prayer is the mightiest force in the universe, and our most powerful weapon to win great victories. The church has always gone to battle on the knees of its prayer warriors, especially on the knees of its praying men.

Reread the quote from E.M.Bounds at the beginning of the lesson (E.M. Bounds was a pastor during the American Civil War; he wrote more than 240 books about the importance of prayer, and his teachings are still used as resources worldwide). Examine yourself. Can you classify yourself as a praying man? Use the following statements from Promise Keepers (a US organization with the purpose of igniting and uniting men to become passionate followers of Jesus Christ) to find out:

## PRAYING MEN<sup>11</sup>

- Praying men are God’s chosen leaders.
- Praying men always feel a need to be alone with God.
- Praying men have a desperation for God.
- Praying men have a longing, a hunger and a thirst for God.
- Praying men have an insatiable desire for the power of God.
- Praying men long to see the glory of God.
- Praying men are the productive workers for God.
- Praying men receive His direction to do work for His glory.
- Praying men are the energizing force in the church.
- Praying men are the determining element in revival.
- Praying men keep God’s Spirit full force in His church.
- Praying men pour into His church spiritual forces to protect her from materialism.
- Praying men win victories, rout the enemy, and defeat the foes of the Gospel.
- Praying men are the ones who attack “the gates of hell.”
- Praying men are the ones who raise God’s banner in the very camp of the enemy.
- Praying men are fearless.

Is this the kind of man you are? If not would you like to be? You can start right now by moving ahead in your prayer life, giving God priority like you never have before. The following assignment will help you in this priority.

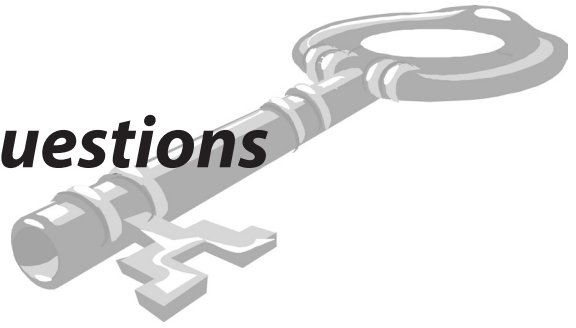


### Project — Day of Prayer

Set aside a day for prayer within the next month. Use the schedule from “A Day of Prayer” in Appendix E to plan your day. Make your preparations as directed and afterwards write an evaluation of how you benefited, what did not work as planned and how you will change it the next time you have a day of prayer.

<sup>11</sup> Promise Keepers, <http://www.promisekeepers.org/prayer/personal>. Accessed April 22, 2009.

# ***Answers to Questions***



## **Question 1**

He prayed night and day (1 Thessalonians 3:10) and without ceasing (Romans 1:9; Colossians 1:9).

## **Question 2**

Your answer. Generally he was concerned about the believers being well-grounded and growing in their faith. Other areas are to know God's power and to grow in love towards each other. You may list more specific areas.

## **Question 3**

Your answer.

## **Question 4**

Prayer obviously was a high priority in Paul's life. He was not resting on his ability to grow Christ's church but totally aware of his dependence on God to care for these believers. Nor did he assume this would just happen, but participated through prayer.

## **Question 5**

He would not defile himself. He stayed true to what he believed.

## **Question 6**

- a) Daniel sought the Lord with mourning and supplication for three weeks.
- b) God began to undertake His answer at the beginning of the three weeks, on the first day.
- c) Daniel received the answer three weeks later.
- d) He continued to pray and fast between the first asking and the actual answer.

## **Question 7**

They frantically tried to get Baal's attention. They asked, they leaped about, they cried in loud voices, and they used sword and lances to cut themselves.

## **Question 8**

He prayed a simple, specific prayer for God to show Himself so that the people would know He was the true God.

## **Question 9**

Your answer.

## **Question 10**

God has promised and He is faithful.

## **Question 11**

Through the blood of Christ.

## Question 12

Be still before God and acknowledge Him in humble faith and adoration.

## Question 13

Humble yourself before God.

## Question 14

4. Accept and value your place in Christ Jesus.
5. Relish Christ's love for you.
6. Pray for God to make you Christ-like—change you into His image.
7. Realize the power of Christ's resurrection in your life.
8. Seek the Holy Spirit's anointing in your life.
9. Surrender yourself afresh to God so He can work in you.

Your answer. The whole focus is on Christ and your relationship to Him and dependence on Him. It is the humility that looks to Him in adoration.

## Question 15

Faith.

## Question 16

- Wrong motives--James 4:3; Matthew 6:33
- Sin/disobedience--Isaiah 59:1,2
- Idolatry--Ezekiel 14:3
- Stinginess--Proverbs 21:13; Acts 20:35
- Lack of forgiveness--Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:12,14,15
- Broken family relationships--1 Peter 3:7
- Lack of faith in God's promises--James 1:5-7

## Question 17

A kingdom prayer is praying for something that has lasting value and importance in the kingdom of God; prayers that release God's will on earth.

## Question 18

He prayed for unity, joy, and peace.

## Question 19

That God would protect them.

## Question 20

His focus was on what would build the believers up in their own faith, set them apart from those around them, and cause others to be attracted to Christ and His salvation.

## Question 21

He prayed for the process, not the results.

### **Question 22**

Act normal when you fast and do it for God rather than trying to impress people.

### **Question 23**

30%+-- 2. Be quiet; 4. Read the Word; 10. Meditation; 11. Listening.

### **Question 24**

40%+ -- 1. Praise; 2. Be quiet; 8. Thanksgiving; 9. Singing; 12 Praise. (If you did not include (2) the percentage will be lower).

### **Question 25**

It states that five would chase 100, and 100 would chase 10,000. It is unlikely that an individual could chase 20 people, as would be the case if he was in a group of 5, but in a group of 100, an individual would actually be chasing 100 people! A dramatic increase of effect!

### **Question 26**

- a) One can help another when he falls; two are warmer together; two can resist an enemy together.
- b) It cannot be quickly torn apart.

# Answers to exercises



## Exercise 1

You answer should be similar to the following:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Jesus' baptism                                       | Luke 3:21–23  |
| Jesus' temptation                                    | Luke 4:1 (It is inferred that he was also praying as He was fasting.) |
| Praying in seclusion                                 | Mark 1:35   |
| Calling of the apostles                              | Luke 6:12–13  |
| Praying alone (although the disciples were with Him) | Luke 9:18   |
| Mount of Transfiguration                             | Luke 9:28–36  |
| Praying followed by teaching on prayer               | Luke 11:1–13  |
| Jesus promises to pray for the Comforter             | John 14:16  |
| Jesus' high priestly prayer                          | John 17   |
| Prayer at Gethsemane                                 | Luke 22:39–46   |

As you write your paragraph let the Lord speak to your heart about a new truth that you had not noticed before, or some challenge you have found to your own prayer life. This is not meant to be a comprehensive summary but rather your personal impressions. Be prepared to share at the seminar.

## Exercise 2

Your answer.

## Exercise 3

Your answer. The goal of this exercise is to help you connect your Christianity with your daily life. Do people see different actions and reactions in you than they do in other people? Do you have commitments in your life which make you stand out in the crowd?

## Exercise 4

Your answer. Be sure to carry this out in your quiet time.

## Exercise 5

Your answer. List each of the myths in your notebook and then address them one by one. You may not feel that all of them have been answered, or that not all of them are myths, so write down your observations and each one and be prepared to discuss it in the seminar.

## Exercise 6

Your answer. Answer the specific questions in your exercise notebook as well as making needed changes to your spiritual journal.

## Exercise 7

Your answer.



### **Exercise 8**

Your answer.

### **Exercise 9**

Your answer.

### **Exercise 10**

Your answer.

### **Exercise 11**

Your answer.

### **Exercise 12**

Your answer. If you need to initiate a prayer group in your church do not start by looking for many people. Look for those who are excited about the possibility of corporate prayer. You only need two or three to begin.

# The Example of our Lord



**T**he connection between the prayer life and the Spirit life is close and indissoluble. It is not merely that we receive the Spirit through prayer, but the Spirit life requires, as an indispensable thing, a continuous prayer life. I can be led continually by the Spirit only as I continually give myself to prayer.

This was very evident in the life of our Lord. A study of his life will give us a wonderful view of the power and holiness of prayer. Consider his baptism. It was when he was baptized and prayed that heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came down upon him. God desired to crown Christ's surrender of himself to the sinner's baptism in Jordan (which was also a surrender of himself to the sinner's death), with the gift of the Spirit for the work that he must accomplish. But this could not have taken place had he not prayed. In the fellowship of worship the Spirit was bestowed on him to lead him out into the desert to spend forty days there in prayer and fasting. Turn to Mark 1:32-35: 'And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door... And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.'

The work of the day and evening had exhausted him. In his healing of the sick and casting out devils, power had gone out of him. While others still slept, he went away to pray and to renew his strength in communion with his Father; He had need of this, otherwise he would not have been ready for the new day. The holy work of delivering souls demands constant renewal through fellowship with God.

Think again of the calling of the apostles as given in Luke 6:12, 13: 'And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.' Is it not clear that if anyone wishes to do God's work, he must take time for fellowship with him, to receive his wisdom and power? The dependence and helplessness of which this is an evidence, open the way and give God the opportunity of revealing his power. How great was the importance of the choosing of the apostles for Christ's own work, for the early Church, and for all time! It had God's blessing and seal; the stamp of prayer was on it.

Read Luke 9:18, 20: 'And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them saying, Whom say the people that I am? ... Peter answering said, The Christ of God.' The Lord had prayed that the Father might reveal to them who he was. It was in answer to prayer that 'he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.' And when Peter said: 'The Christ of God' the

Lord said to him, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven' (Matt. 16:17). This great confession was the fruit of prayer.

Read further Luke 9:28-35: 'He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered ... And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.' Christ had desired that, for the strengthening of their faith, God might give them an assurance from heaven that he was the Son of God. Prayer obtained for our Lord Jesus himself, as well as for his disciples, what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Does it not become still more clear that what God wills to accomplish on earth needs prayer as its indispensable condition? And there is but one way for Christ and believers. A heart and mouth open toward heaven in believing prayer will certainly not be put to shame.

Read Luke 11:1-13: 'As he was praying in a certain plain, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray...' And then he gave them that inexhaustible prayer: 'Our Father who art in heaven.' In this he showed what was going on in his heart, when he prayed that God's name might be hallowed, and his kingdom come, and his will be done, and all of this 'on earth as it is in heaven.' How will this ever come to pass? Through prayer. This prayer has been uttered through the ages by countless millions, to their unspeakable comfort. But forget not this — it was born out of the prayer of our Lord Jesus. He had been praying, and therefore was able to give that glorious answer.

Read John 14:16: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. 'The entire dispensation of the New Testament, with the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is the outcome of the prayer of the Lord Jesus. It is as though God had impressed on the gift of the Holy Spirit this seal — in answer to the prayer of the Lord Jesus, and later of his disciples, the Holy Spirit will surely come. But it will be in answer to prayer like that of our Lord, in which he took time to be alone with God and in that prayer offered himself wholly to God.

Read John 17, the high priestly, most holy prayer! Here the Son prays first for himself, that the Father will glorify him by giving him power for the cross, by raising him from the dead, by setting him at his right hand. These great things could not take place save through prayer. Prayer had power to obtain them.

Afterward he prayed for his disciples, that the Father might preserve them from the evil one, might keep them from the world, and might sanctify them. And then, further, he prayed for all those who through their word might believe on him, that all might be one in love, even as the Father and the Son were one. This prayer gives us a glimpse into the wonderful relationship between the Father and the Son, and teaches us, that all the blessings of heaven come continually through the prayer of him who is at God's right hand and ever prays for us. But it teaches us, also, that all these blessings must in the same manner be desired and asked for by us. The whole nature and glory of God's blessings consist in this — they must be obtained in answer to prayer, by hearts entirely surrendered to him, and hearts that believe in the power of prayer.

Now we come to the most remarkable instance of all. In Gethsemane we see that our Lord, according to his constant habit, consulted and arranged with the Father the work he had to do on earth. First he besought him in agony and bloody sweat to let the cup pass from him; when he understood that this could not be, then he prayed for strength to drink it, and surrendered himself with the words: 'Thy will be done.' He was able to meet the enemy full of courage and in the power of God gave himself over to the death of the cross. He had prayed.

Oh, why is it that God's children have so little faith in the glory of prayer, as the great power for subjecting our own wills to that of God, as well as for the confident carrying out of the work of God in spite of our great weakness? Would that we might learn from our Lord Jesus how impossible it is to walk with God, to obtain God's blessing or leading, or to do his work joyously and

fruitfully, apart from close unbroken fellowship with him who is ever a living fountain of spiritual life and power!

Let every Christian think over this simple study of the prayer life of our Lord Jesus and endeavor from God's word, with prayer for the leading of the Holy Spirit, to learn what the life is which the Lord Jesus Christ bestows upon him and supports in him. It is nothing else than a life of daily prayer. Let each minister especially recognize how entirely vain it is to attempt to do the work of our Lord in any other way than that in which he did it. Let us, as workers, begin to believe that we are set free from the ordinary business of the world, that we may, above everything, have time, in our Savior's name, and with his Spirit, and in oneness with him, to ask for and obtain blessing for the world.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew Murray, *The Prayer Life*, <http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/murray/praylife/prayer05.htm>. Accessed April 23, 2009

# The Example of Paul

APPENDIX



*Be Ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.'*  
~1 Corinthians 11:1

**P**aul was a minister who prayed much for his congregation. Let us read his words prayerfully and calmly so that we may hear the voice of the Spirit. What food for meditation!

*Night and day praying exceedingly that we ... might perfect that which is lacking in your faith... The Lord make you to increase ... to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness (1 Thess. 3:10-13).*

*The very God of peace sanctify you wholly (1 Thess. 5:23).*

*Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself... comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work (2 Thess. 2:16, 17).*

*Without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request...that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established (Rom. 1:9-11).*

*My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved (Rom. 10:1).*

*I ... cease not ... making mention of you in my prayers; that God ... may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him ... that ye may know ... what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe (Eph. 1:16-19).*

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father ... that he would grant you ... to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted ... in love ... might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).*

*Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy ... I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more ... that ye may be sincere ... filled with the fruits of righteousness (Phil. 1:4, 9-11).*

*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).*



*We ... do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will ... that ye might walk worthy of the Lord ... strengthened with all might according to his glorious power (Col. 1:9-11).*

*I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you ... as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love (Col. 2:1, 2).*

What a study for the inner chamber! These passages teach us that unceasing prayer formed a large part of Paul's service in the gospel; we see the high spiritual aim which he set before himself, in his work on behalf of believers; and the tender and self-sacrificing love with which he ever continued to think of the Church and its needs. Let us ask God to bring each one of us, and all the ministers of his word, to a life of which such prayer is the healthy and natural outflow. We shall need to turn again and again to these pages if we would really be brought by the Spirit to the apostolic life which God has given us as an example.

Paul was a minister who asked his congregation to pray much. Read again with prayerful attention:

*I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea (Rom. 15:30,31).*

*We ... trust ... in God ... that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us (2 Cor. 1:9-11).*

*Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel ... as I ought to speak (Eph. 6:18-20).*

*For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19).*

*Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak ... as I ought to speak (Col. 4:2-4).*

*Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you (2 Thess. 3: 1).*

What a deep insight Paul had as to the unity of the body of Christ and the relation of the members one to another! It is as we permit the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in us that he will reveal this truth to us, and we too shall have this insight. What a glimpse he gives us of the power of the spiritual life among these Christians, by the way in which he reckoned that at Rome, and Corinth, and Ephesus, and Colossae, and Philippi, there were men and women on whom he could rely for prayer that would reach heaven and have power with God! And what a lesson for all ministers, to lead them to inquire if they truly appreciate the unity of the body at its right value; if they are endeavoring to train up Christians as intercessors; and if they indeed understand that Paul had that confidence because he was himself so strong in prayer for the congregation! Let us learn the lesson and beseech God that ministers and congregations together may grow in the grace of prayer, so that their entire service and Christian life may witness that the Spirit of prayer rules them. Then we may be confident that God will avenge his own elect which cry out day and night unto him.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from Chapter 10 of Andrew Murray's book, *The Prayer Life*. Original date of publishing not known. (public domain)

# Daily Fellowship with God

A P P E N D I X



1. The first and chief need of our Christian life is, Fellowship with God.

The Divine life within us comes from God, and is entirely dependent upon Him. As I need every moment afresh the air to breathe, as the sun every moment afresh sends down its light, so it is only in direct living communication with God that my soul can be strong.

The manna of one day was corrupt when the next day came. I must every day have fresh grace from heaven, and I obtain it only in direct waiting upon God Himself. Begin each day by tarrying before God, and letting Him touch you. Take time to meet God.

2. To this end, let your first act in your devotion be a setting yourself still before God. In prayer, or worship, everything depends upon God taking the chief place. I must bow quietly before Him in humble faith and adoration, speaking thus within my heart: "God is. God is near. God is love, longing to communicate Himself to me. God the Almighty One, Who worketh all in all, is even now waiting to work in me, and make Himself known." Take time, till you know God is very near.
3. When you have given God His place of honour, glory, and power, take your place of deepest lowliness, and seek to be filled with the Spirit of humility. As a creature it is your blessedness to be nothing that God may be all in you. As a sinner you are not worthy to look up to God; bow in self-abasement. As a saint, let God's love overwhelm you, and bow you still lower down. Sink down before Him in humility, meekness, patience, and surrender to His goodness and mercy. He will exalt you. Oh! Take time, to get very low before God.
4. Then accept and value your place in Christ Jesus. God delights in nothing but His beloved Son, and can be satisfied with nothing else in those who draw nigh to Him. Enter deep into God's holy presence in the boldness which the blood gives, and in the assurance that in Christ you are most well pleasing. In Christ you are within the veil. You have access into the very heart and love of the Father. This is the great object of fellowship with God, that I may have more of God in my life, and that God may see Christ formed in me. Be silent before God and let Him bless you.
5. This Christ is a living Person. He loves you with a personal love, and He looks every day for the personal response of your love. Look into His face with trust, till His love really shines into your heart. Make His heart glad by telling Him that you do love Him. He offers Himself to you as a personal Saviour and Keeper from the power of sin. Do not ask, can I be kept from sinning, if I keep close to Him? But ask can I be kept from sinning, if He always keeps close to me? And you see at once how safe it is to trust Him.

6. We have not only Christ's life in us as a power, and His presence with us as a person, but we have His likeness to be wrought into us. He is to be formed in us, so that His form or figure, His likeness, can be seen in us. Bow before God until you get some sense of the greatness and blessedness of the work to be carried on by God in you this day. Say to God, "Father, here am I for Thee to give as much in me of Christ's likeness as I can receive." And wait to hear Him say, "My child, I give thee as much of Christ as thy heart is open to receive." The God who revealed Jesus in the flesh and perfected Him, will reveal Him in thee and perfect thee in Him. The Father loves the Son, and delights to work out His image and likeness in thee. Count upon it that this blessed work will be done in thee as thou waitest on thy God, and holdest fellowship with Him.
7. The likeness to Christ consists chiefly in two things—the likeness of His death and resurrection, (Rom. 6:5). The death of Christ was the consummation of His humility and obedience, the entire giving up of His life to God. In Him we are dead to sin. As we sink down in humility and dependence and entire surrender to God, the power of His death works in us, and we are made conformable to His death. And so we know Him in the power of His resurrection, in the victory over sin, and all the joy and power of the risen life. Therefore every morning, "present yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead." He will maintain the life He gave, and bestow the grace to live as risen ones.
8. All this can only be in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you. Count upon Him to glorify Christ in you. Count upon Christ to increase in you the inflowing of His Spirit. As you wait before God to realize His presence, remember that the Spirit is in you to reveal the things of God. Seek in God's presence to have the anointing of the Spirit of Christ so truly that your whole life may every moment be spiritual.
9. As you meditate on this wondrous salvation and seek full fellowship with the great and holy God, and wait on Him to reveal Christ in you, you will feel how needful the giving up of all is to receive Him. Seek grace to know what it means to live as wholly for God as Christ did. Only the Holy Spirit Himself can teach you what an entire yielding of the whole life to God can mean. Wait on God to show you in this what you do not know. Let every approach to God, and every request for fellowship with Him be accompanied by a new, very definite, and entire surrender to Him to work in you.
10. "By faith" must here, as through all Scripture, and all the spiritual life, be the keynote. As you tarry before God, let it be in a deep quiet faith in Him, the Invisible One, who is so near, so holy, so mighty, so loving. In a deep, restful faith too, that all the blessings and powers of the heavenly life are around you, and in you. Just yield yourself in the faith of a perfect trust to the Ever Blessed Holy Trinity to work out all God's purpose in you. Begin each day thus in fellowship with God, and God will be all in all to you.

# Hindrances To Prayer



This is chapter 9 of the classic book *How to Pray* by Reuben A Torrey, an American evangelist, pastor, educator and writer who lived 1856-1928.

**W**e have gone very carefully into the positive conditions of prevailing prayer; but there are some things which hinder prayer. These God has made very plain in His Word.

## **1. The first hindrance to prayer we will find in James 4:3,**

*Ye ask and receive not BECAUSE YE ASK AMISS, THAT YE MAY SPEND IT IN YOUR PLEASURES.*

A selfish purpose in prayer robs prayer of power. Very many prayers are selfish. These may be prayers for things for which it is perfectly proper to ask, for things which it is the will of God to give, but the motive of the prayer is entirely wrong, and so the prayer falls powerless to the ground. The true purpose in prayer is that God may be glorified in the answer. If we ask any petition merely that we may receive something to use in our pleasures or in our own gratification in one way or another, we “ask amiss” and need not expect to receive what we ask. This explains why many prayers remain unanswered.

For example, many a woman is praying for the conversion of her husband. That certainly is a most proper thing to ask; but many a woman’s motive in asking for the conversion of her husband is entirely improper, it is selfish. She desires that her husband may be converted because it would be so much more pleasant for her to have a husband who sympathized with her; or it is so painful to think that her husband might die and be lost forever. For some such selfish reason as this she desires to have her husband converted. The prayer is purely selfish. Why should a woman desire the conversion of her husband? First of all and above all, that God may be glorified; because she cannot bear the thought that God the Father should be dishonored by her husband trampling underfoot the Son of God.

Many pray for a revival. That certainly is a prayer that is pleasing to God, it is along the line of His will; but many prayers for revivals are purely selfish. The churches desire revivals in order that the membership may be increased, in order that the church may have a position of more power and influence in the community, in order that the church treasury may be filled, in order that a good report may be made at the presbytery or conference or association. For such low purposes as these, churches and ministers oftentimes are praying for a revival, and often-

times too God does not answer the prayer. Why should we pray for a revival? For the glory of God, because we cannot endure it that God should continue to be dishonored by the worldliness of the church, by the sins of unbelievers, by the proud unbelief of the day; because God's Word is being made void; in order that God may be glorified by the outpouring of His Spirit on the Church of Christ. For these reasons first of all and above all, we should pray for a revival.

Many a prayer for the Holy Spirit is a purely selfish prayer. It certainly is God's will to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him—He has told us so plainly in His Word (Luke 11:13), but many a prayer for the Holy Spirit is hindered by the selfishness of the motive that lies back of the prayer. Men and women pray for the Holy Spirit in order that they may be happy, or in order that they may be saved from the wretchedness of defeat in their lives, or in order that they may have power as Christian workers, or for some other purely selfish motive. Why should we pray for the Spirit? In order that God may no longer be dishonored by the low level of our Christian lives and by our ineffectiveness in service, in order that God may be glorified in the new beauty that comes into our lives and the new power that comes into our service.

## **2. The second hindrance to prayer we find in Is. 59:1,2:**

*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But YOUR INIQUITIES HAVE SEPARATED BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOD, and YOUR SINS HAVE HID HIS FACE FROM YOU, THAT HE WILL NOT HEAR....*

Sin hinders prayer. Many a man prays and prays and prays, and gets absolutely no answer to his prayer. Perhaps he is tempted to think that it is not the will of God to answer, or he may think that the days when God answered prayer, if He ever did, are over. So the Israelites seem to have thought. They thought that the Lord's hand was shortened, that it could not save, and that His ear had become heavy that it could no longer hear.

"Not so," said Isaiah, "God's ear is just as open to hear as ever, His hand just as mighty to save; but there is a hindrance. That hindrance is your own sins. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear."

It is so to-day. Many and many a man is crying to God in vain, simply because of sin in his life. It may be some sin in the past that has been unconfessed and unjudged, it may be some sin in the present that is cherished, very likely is not even looked upon as sin, but there the sin is, hidden away somewhere in the heart or in the life, and God "will not hear."

Any one who finds his prayers ineffective should not conclude that the thing which he asks of God is not according to His will, but should go alone with God with the Psalmist's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Ps. 139:23,24), and wait before Him until He puts His finger upon the thing that is displeasing in His sight. Then this sin should be confessed and put away.

I well remember a time in my life when I was praying for two definite things that it seemed that I must have, or God would be dishonored; but the answer did not come. I awoke in the middle of the night in great physical suffering and great distress of soul. I cried to God for these things, reasoned with Him as to how necessary it was that I get them, and get them at once; but no answer came. I asked God to show me if there was anything wrong in my own life. Something came to my mind that had often come to it before, something definite but which I was unwilling to confess as sin. I said to God, "If this is wrong I will give it up"; but still no answer came. In my innermost heart, though I had never admitted it, I knew it was wrong.

At last I said: "This is wrong. I have sinned. I will give it up."



I found peace. In a few moments I was sleeping like a child. In the morning I woke well in body, and the money that was so much needed for the honor of God's name came.

Sin is an awful thing, and one of the most awful things about it is the way it hinders prayer, the way it severs the connection between us and the source of all grace and power and blessing. Anyone who would have power in prayer must be merciless in dealing with his own sins. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. 66:18) So long as we hold on to sin or have any controversy with God, we cannot expect Him to heed our prayers. If there is anything that is constantly coming up in your moments of close communion with God, that is the thing that hinders prayer: put it away.

### **3. The third hindrance to prayer is found in Ez. 14:3,**

*Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?(R.V.)*

IDOLS IN THE HEART CAUSE GOD TO REFUSE TO LISTEN TO OUR PRAYERS.

What is an idol? An idol is anything that takes the place of God, anything that is the supreme object of our affection. God alone has the right to the supreme place in our hearts. Everything and everyone else must be subordinate to Him.

Many a man makes an idol of his wife. Not that a man can love his wife any too much, but he can put her in the wrong place, he can put her before God; and when a man regards his wife's pleasure before God's pleasure, when he gives her the first place and God the second place, his wife is an idol, and God cannot hear his prayers.

Many a woman makes an idol of her children. Not that we can love our children too much. The more dearly we love Christ, the more dearly we love our children; but we can put our children in the wrong place, we can put them before God, and their interests before God's interests. When we do this our children are our idols.

Many a man makes an idol of his reputation or his business. Reputation or business is put before God. God cannot hear the prayers of such a man.

One great question for us to decide, if we would have power in prayer is, Is God absolutely first? Is He before wife, before children, before reputation, before business, before our own lives? If not, prevailing prayer is impossible.

God often calls our attention to the fact that we have an idol, by not answering our prayers, and thus leading us to inquire as to why our prayers are not answered, and so we discover the idol, put it away, and God hears our prayers.

### **4. The fourth hindrance to prayer is found in Prov. 21:13,**

*WHOSO STOPPETH HIS EARS AT THE CRY OF THE POOR, HE ALSO SHALL CRY HIMSELF, BUT SHALL NOT BE HEARD.*

There is perhaps no greater hindrance to prayer than stinginess, the lack of liberality toward the poor and toward God's work. It is the one who gives generously to others who receives generously from God. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38, R.V.) The generous man is the mighty man of prayer. The stingy man is the powerless man of prayer.

One of the most wonderful statements about prevailing prayer (already referred to) 1 John 3:22, "Whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," is made in direct connection with generosity to-

ward the needy. In the context we are told that it is when we love, not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth, when we open our hearts toward the brother in need, it is then and only then we have confidence toward God in prayer.

Many a man and woman who is seeking to find the secret of their powerlessness in prayer need not seek far; it is nothing more nor less than downright stinginess. George Muller, to whom reference has already been made, was a mighty man of prayer because he was a mighty giver. What he received from God never stuck to his fingers; he immediately passed it on to others. He was constantly receiving because he was constantly giving. When one thinks of the selfishness of the professing church to-day, how the orthodox churches of this land do not average \$1.00 per year per member for foreign missions, it is no wonder that the church has so little power in prayer. If we would get from God, we must give to others. Perhaps the most wonderful promise in the Bible in regard to God's supplying our need is Phil. 4:19, "And my God shall fulfill every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (R.V.) This glorious promise was made to the Philippian church, and made in immediate connection with their generosity.

**5. The fifth hindrance to prayer is found in Mark 11:25,**

*And when ye stand praying, FORGIVE, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

An unforgiving spirit is one of the commonest hindrances to prayer. Prayer is answered on the basis that our sins are forgiven; and God cannot deal with us on the basis of forgiveness while we are harboring ill-will against those who have wronged us. Any one who is nursing a grudge against another has closed the ear of God against his own petition. How many there are crying to God for the conversion of husband, children, friends, and wondering why it is that their prayer is not answered, when the whole secret is some grudge that they have in their hearts against some one who has injured them, or who they fancy has injured them. Many and many a mother and father are allowing their children to go down to eternity unsaved, for the miserable gratification of hating somebody.

**6. The sixth hindrance to prayer is found in 1 Peter 3:7,**

*Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered. (R.V.)*

Here we are plainly told that A WRONG RELATION BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE IS A HINDRANCE TO PRAYER.

In many and many a case the prayers of husbands are hindered because of their failure of duty toward their wives. On the other hand, it is also doubtless true that the prayers of wives are hindered because of their failure in duty toward their husbands. If husbands and wives should seek diligently to find the cause of their unanswered prayers, they would often find it in their relations to one another.

Many a man who makes great pretensions to piety, and is very active in Christian work, shows but little consideration in his treatment of his wife, and is oftentimes unkind, if not brutal; then he wonders why it is that his prayers are not answered. The verse that we have just quoted explains the seeming mystery. On the other hand, many a woman who is very devoted to the church, and very faithful in attendance upon all services, treats her husband with the most unpardonable neglect, is cross and peevish toward him, wounds him by the sharpness of her speech, and by her ungovernable temper; then wonders why it is that she has no power in prayer.

There are other things in the relations of husbands and wives which cannot be spoken of publicly, but which doubtless are oftentimes a hindrance in approaching God in prayer. There is much of sin covered up under the holy name of marriage that is a cause of spiritual deadness, and of powerlessness in prayer. Any man or woman whose prayers seem to bring no answer should spread their whole married life out before God, and ask Him to put His finger upon anything in it that is displeasing in His sight.

**7. The seventh hindrance to prayer is found in James 1:5-7,**

*But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask IN FAITH, NOTHING DOUBTING; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. (R.V.)*

Prayers are hindered by unbelief. God demands that we shall believe His Word absolutely. To question it is to make Him a liar. Many of us do that when we plead His promises, and is it any wonder that our prayers are not answered? How many prayers are hindered by our wretched unbelief! We go to God and ask Him for something that is positively promised in His Word, and then we do not more than half expect to get it. "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

# Eternal Perspective

APPENDIX



**T**hough I've been a believer for a long time (38 years), I have struggled with prayer through most of that time. I know—and always have—that prayer is important to my spiritual growth. But still, it's been a struggle.

I've tried lists. I've tried various ways of organizing my time. I've tried setting up a prayer place. I've tried walking around while I pray. But most of those attempts ended in frustration. I couldn't seem to concentrate, to get excited for more than 5 to 10 minutes at a stretch—and those were the good days!

About five years ago—as we were getting ready to launch *Pray!* [a bi-monthly magazine dedicated to the topic of prayer]—I discovered something that radically changed my prayer life. I learned how to pray “kingdom” prayers.

## Typical Prayer

Usually when we intercede for others it is because we have been asked to pray for something specific. Mrs. Smith has hurt her foot and is having trouble walking. Mrs. Martin's daughter Wendy, away at college, has a biology test coming up. She's pre-med and needs a good grade. A friend is having a dispute with a neighbor and hopes the neighbor will see things his way so they can solve the problem.

While nothing is wrong with people asking for prayer for these types of things—and nothing is wrong with praying for them either—there is something . . . well . . . unexciting about them. Unless we are directly involved in the problem or related to those who are, most of us find it hard to drum up much enthusiasm for such prayers. The reason? We are simply repeating to God what another person wants—without much thought of what God wants.

When that happens, we usually agree to pray but quickly forget about it, or we pray only out of guilt or obligation. Neither response brings passion into our prayer lives.

## Kingdom Prayer

Kingdom-focused prayers, however, cannot help but infuse passion into our prayers. What do I mean by kingdom-focused prayer? Simply this: When we pray for something that has lasting value and importance in the kingdom of God, or when we turn our prayers for a situation into prayers that release God's will on earth, we are praying kingdom-focused prayers.

Remember the Holy Spirit's role in prayer? When “*we do not know what we ought to pray for . . . the Spirit himself intercedes for us*” (Ro. 8:26). Kingdom-focused prayers are ones that are more fully in line with what we “ought to pray for,” and with what the Holy Spirit is interceding in the situation.

## Models for the Kingdom Focus

The Apostle Paul provides many wonderful models for kingdom-focused prayer. He had a lot of people under his care: people with needs, people who faced life-and-death situations. Yet in all of his New Testament letters, I can't find any evidence that Paul prayed for an obvious, logical answer to a specific need. Paul's only "need-oriented" prayer appears to be in 2 Corinthians 12, where he prayed that his tormenting "thorn in [the] flesh" would be removed.

Let's look, however, at what Paul did pray for those who had tremendous needs.

**The church in Rome.** *"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro. 15:5–6). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (v. 13).*

Notice that although the Roman church was probably experiencing persecution, and was trying to survive in a city hostile to Christianity, Paul didn't pray for protection or safety (which would have been at the top of my prayer list!). Rather, he prayed for unity, joy, and peace. Why? Paul knew that unity among believers would attract others to Jesus. Jesus had said, *"My prayer is . . . that all of them may be one, Father, . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me"* (Jn. 17:20–21). He also said, *"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself"* (Jn. 12:32). Therefore, rather than pray for the obvious (protection), Paul prayed with kingdom eyes, pleading for unity so people would be attracted to Christ.

Paul also prayed that the Roman Christians would experience joy and peace amid the turmoil of their lives. Why? So that they would overflow with hope. People who have hope in tough times are attractive to those who don't. Again, Paul knew that people would come to Christ if they saw hope in believers' lives. In other words, he saw with kingdom eyes ("Lord, give them hope") rather than earthly eyes ("Lord, get them out of this").

**The church in Ephesus.** In Paul's time, Ephesus was the center of worship for the goddess Diana (Acts 19). Paul had almost been killed by an angry mob on one of his visits there, so he knew the stress and pressure the believers were under. Again, rather than pray for the obvious, Paul prayed for spiritual development: *"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe"* (Eph. 1:17–19; see also Eph. 3:16–19).

Paul's kingdom focus is also seen in his prayers for the church in Philippi (Phil. 1:9–11), for the church of Colosse (Col. 1:9–12), and for the church at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:12–13, 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:16–17), all of whom were experiencing great and specific challenges.

Notice that in all of Paul's prayers, he prayed for the process, not the results. He must have had some thought of the intended results; there is just no indication that he prayed for them specifically.

Look at his prayer for the Philippians, for instance: *"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless"* (Phil. 1:9–10). Paul wanted the Philippians to discern what was best, to be pure and blameless. But he didn't pray for that; he prayed that their love would abound more and more, especially in their knowledge and insight into the depths of Christ's love. He prayed the process. He knew that if they grew in love, they would be able to discern what was best. Love would cause them to get along with each other. Love would give them a desire to stay pure and blameless.



## A Lesson from Life

The most important thing I've learned about kingdom-focused prayer is not to be so quick to pray for the obvious. I try to consider the situation. I try to think of some kingdom-impacting things I could pray. I pray for spiritual growth in the lives of those involved in the situation. I pray for fruit of the Spirit to be developed in their lives. I pray for Christlikeness and character. I ask God how I should pray. If nothing comes to me, I pray Scripture.

A great lesson in this area came for me when my daughter, Amy, was in sixth grade—her first year of middle school. A giving, sensitive girl, Amy was picked on that year, not only by her classmates, but by her friends as well. As a father, I wanted a quick solution to the problem.

At first, I simply downplayed things. “Middle school kids are mean, Amy,” I would say. “Just don't let it bother you.” But it was getting her down. Her grades were suffering. She was starting to dislike school, a first for her.

I can't honestly say I *never* prayed for the obvious results: that kids would stop picking on her, that her work habits would improve, that she would like school again. But for the most part, I focused my prayers for her elsewhere. I prayed that Christlikeness would be developed in her, that her faith in Christ would become more vibrant and real.

And God worked. Amy's prayer life grew by leaps and bounds as she poured out her heart to Jesus. The most unexpected answer, however, came through a change God made in my wife and me. God led us to do something we never had thought of doing: homeschooling Amy the next year, seventh grade. While this was not easy, it was a blessing. We gained insights into Amy we never had before, and those insights have further fueled our prayers for her. We watched her grow spiritually through serious Bible study and a more active devotional life.

I never would have thought to pray about the possibility of homeschooling. Yet clearly, this was God's will for us. As we prayed for kingdom values to be birthed in Amy, this was where God led us.

In its most basic form, that is kingdom-focused praying: Praying for biblical virtues and character, and leaving the results to God. While it is not wrong to pray for specific or desired results, that's only a small part of the picture. When we pray for the greater “kingdom” things that are on God's heart, however, surprising and amazing things will happen.

As I've learned to pray this way, I've noticed an excitement in watching how God will move when I've committed a situation to His kingdom principles. As I've prayed for the process—and left the results to God—my desire and passion for prayer has grown. It will for you, too.<sup>14</sup>

**By Jonathan Graf**

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<sup>14</sup> Article from Pray! Magazine, Issue #29, March/April 2002 <http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=2.29.2>

# Day of Prayer

APPENDIX



Extended prayer retreats alone with God are both Biblical and helpful in developing an intimate relationship with God. God longs to walk with you in the cool of the day as he did with Adam, but we are rarely there. We are in a hurry to carry out our plans, often plans we claim are for His Kingdom. It takes time to be holy. It takes time to develop our relationship with God. Try to make it a priority to have a day of prayer once a quarter. If you are a church leader you need to consider more frequent prayer retreats. It is hard to be effective as a soldier when you ignore your commanding officer.

|   |  |
|---|--|
|  | <p><b>Top of Every Hour</b></p> <p>At the beginning of every hour we focus on a new topic of prayer. This keeps us focused and moving along in our intercessory prayer time.</p>   |
|  | <p><b>First 10 minutes</b></p> <p>The first 10 minutes are preparatory so use them for worship, thanksgiving and quietness.<br/> <i>"Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, be thankful and bless His name." Psalm 100:4</i><br/> <i>"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10</i></p>   |
|  | <p><b>40 Minutes of Intercession</b></p> <p>Each hour is composed of a solid 40 minutes of intercession on the topic at hand. If you find trouble staying focused then use some prayer actions to keep attentive. Change your position often, journal to God, pray some out loud, pray Scripture, etc.</p>   |
|  | <p><b>Last Ten Minutes</b></p> <p>The last 10 minutes of every hour is time for a break. You are only human and need to break your routine to keep from weariness. Take a bathroom break, a coffee or juice break. If you are on a retreat with others use this time to chat with a friend about what God is teaching you about prayer. But—keep it to 10 minutes.</p> |

## SUGGESTED SCHEDULE OF PRAYER FOR AN 8-HOUR PRAYER DAY

This is only a suggestion, but it would be wise the first time you do this to take this schedule with you and try to follow it. Or, using this as a basis, write out your own prayer schedule for the day and follow it.

### 9 AM Spend this first hour **all** in **worship and praise**

- 10 minutes reading praise Scriptures from the Psalms
- 10 minutes voicing your praise to God.
- 10 minutes being still before Him, not initiating conversation but savoring His presence.
- 10 minutes in giving thanks to Him.
- 10 minutes using song and Scripture to echo praise to God. Personalize both the songs and the Scripture as your prayer to Him.
- 10 minutes for private needs

### 10 AM **Spiritual Inventory**

- 10 minutes in worship
- Spend the next 40 minutes in examining yourself and confessing sin that God reveals to you. You may want to use passages of Scripture the Lord brings to mind to examine your heart. Here is the Spiritual Inventory from Lesson 4 for your convenience:

| Spiritual Inventory |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Your Words          | Have you spoken evil of anyone, criticized, used sharp words?       |
| Your Attitudes      | Do you have a spirit of complaining, grouchy, know-it-all?          |
| Your Thoughts       | Are you entertaining greed, doubts, fears, bitterness, anger, lust? |
| Your Actions        | Have you broken God's laws, trespassed on forbidden ground?         |

As you work continue your spiritual inventory, pray about areas you are struggling in: worries, temptations, failures, heartaches. Commit all of this to God for Him to do a new work in your life and to redeem what seems unredeemable to you.

- 10-minute break

### 11 AM **Petition**

- 10 minutes worship
- The next 40 minutes are for the personal requests you have. It may cover the areas of:
  - Physical/material needs for self and family, including health, finances, job situations
  - Relationships, especially with your spouse, children and parents.
  - Wants and wishes
  - Spiritual growth: fruit of the Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, purity, holiness

Spend some of this time in quietness listening to the Holy Spirit's voice in your heart and mind. Write down in your journal thoughts the Spirit brings to you concerning these areas.

## **12 PM Ministry**

- 10 minutes of worship. Remember that you can use this time to pray back praise portions of Scripture or to sing to the Lord.
- During this 40 minutes focus on what ministries you are involved in in the church. Pray for your relationship with coworkers, direction for the ministry, fruit, etc. You may pray for others involved in these ministries, for the future, for plans and goals you need to set.
- 10 minute break in preparation for lunch time.

**1 PM** Lunch break (You may not want to take this much time, or if you are fasting you might not take it at all, so readjust your schedule if necessary.)

## **2 PM The Unsaved**

- 10 minutes of worship
- 10 minutes—pray to receive a burden for the lost both for yourself and your church. For laborers who are willing to go out and harvest.
- 10 minutes—pray for boldness and wisdom in witnessing both for yourself and your fellow believers. For evangelistic events to be planned. For God to prepare hearts.
- 20 minutes—pray for those specific souls you have a burden for.
- 10 minute break

## **3 PM Local and National**

- 10 minutes of worship
- 20 minutes of intercessory prayer on **local** issues including 3 areas: church, community, government.
- 20 minutes of intercessory prayer on **national** issues including 3 areas: denomination, national events or problems, government.
- 10 minute break

## **4 PM World**

- 10 minutes of worship
- 10 minutes--Pray for a world vision for yourself and your church. For any missions events being planned, or that they would be planned.
- 10 minutes--Intercession for missions, specifically missionaries you know personally or those sent out by your church.
- 10 minutes--Choose one or two countries to pray for: for their government leaders and peace, for the strengthening and revival of the church, and for the lost in that country.
- 10 minutes--Pray for any current world situations.

## **5 PM Wrap-up**

This last hour is meant to be a time of evaluation of your day, of praising the Lord specifically for this time set aside for Him. If you have planned this day as a group then meet together during this hour as a group and praise together and then share what God has been doing during this time. Write final thoughts in your journal, what the Lord has shown you, burdens he has laid on your heart, steps you need to take in some area of your life and ministry. Make sure at least 10 minutes is spent in quietness and listening.