

***DEVELOPING
A CLEAR VISION
OF PRAYER***

By: Pastor Gary G. Dull



***“And He spake a parable unto them
to this end, that men ought always
to pray, and not to faint;”
Luke 18:1***

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The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, "*WHERE THERE IS NO VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH: BUT HE THAT KEEPETH THE LAW, HAPPY IS HE.*" What a strong and clear admonition that is! It is not at all difficult to have a general understanding of what the verse is saying. Where there is no clear vision, there is no positive effect, but when there is a clear vision of the "law," which is the Word of God, there is blessing. The sooner we learn that principle, the sooner we will be what God wants us to be in every aspect of our Christian life.

Even though the principle of Proverbs 29:18 is applicable to every aspect of the Christian life, in this study we want to apply it to our prayer life. The fact is that if we as God's children do not have a clear vision of what the Bible teaches about prayer, and do not apply what it teaches about prayer to our lives daily, we will in no way be the blessed people God would have us to be and we will never be able to see God work as He desires to work in our personal and church lives. So, let's conduct this study on prayer from the perspective of developing a clear vision of what God's Word says about prayer so that we will not "perish" from the will and blessing of God but will rather prosper in understanding the basic principles of prayer which will translate into a life and ministry of godliness and fruitfulness that will not only bless us, but more importantly glorify God.

The Bible says in James 5:16-18:

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and earth brought forth her fruit."

That passage of scripture should be a great encouragement for each of us to develop and advance our personal prayer life. We often place Elijah on a high pedestal as being a superman of faith. Perhaps he was in certain ways, but the Bible indicates he was a human being just like the rest of us who had the same passions and weaknesses that we do today, but when he prayed, God heard and answered clearly and specifically. If God answered Elijah, who knew God 930 years before Christ, then He will answer those of us who know God today. That is just the way God works when His children pray through faith.

In modern times, George Mueller, who lived in the 1800's, was a man "subject to like passions as we are," but was one of the greatest prayer warriors of all time. God called George Mueller to care for the homeless and orphaned children, which he did effectively through the exercise of prayer.

According to his biographer, George Mueller read the Bible through 200 times, of which 100 of those times he did so on his knees. His life was limited without social media, the Internet, or the telephone, but in the 1800's, he ministered and cared for over 2,000 children. It is said, according to his own journal, that on many occasions there would be no food to feed the children; yet with a bare table he would close his eyes, bow his head, and thank God for the food that was about to be set before them. And time after time, by the conclusion of his prayer of thanksgiving and blessing, somebody, perhaps even a special angel of the Lord, would come by

and leave a miracle. According to his own journal, Mr. Mueller had documented in writing more than 50,000 answers to prayer.

George Mueller once said, *"It is not enough to begin to pray, nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must pray patiently, believing, continuing in prayer until we obtain an answer. We have also to believe that God does hear us and will answer our prayers. Most frequently, we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained and in not expecting the blessing."*

Certainly, there is a lot we could learn from studying the lives of such men as Elijah and George Mueller, but there is also a lot we can learn from the study of the Bible and through our personal prayer life.

I encourage you to take time to study some of the great prayers of the Bible. To help you in this study, please take a look at the following notable prayers of the Bible:

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Abraham - Genesis 18:23-33
- Jacob - Genesis 32:23-32
- Moses - Exodus 15:1-18; 32:11-14; 33:12-17
- Gideon - Judges 6
- Hannah - 1 Samuel 2:1-10
- David - 2 Samuel 7:18-29; 1 Chronicles 29:11-20
- Solomon - 1 Kings 3:6-8; 8:22-53
- Elijah - I Kings 18
- Isaiah 6:1-13
- Jehoshaphat - 2 Chronicles 20
- Jeremiah - Jeremiah 32:16-25
- Ezra - Ezra 9:5-15
- Nehemiah - Nehemiah 9:5-27
- Daniel - Daniel 9:1-19
- Jonah 2:1-9
- Habakkuk - Habakkuk 1:12-17
- Job - The entire book

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Mary - Luke 1:46-55
- Simeon - Luke 2:29-32
- The Early Church - Acts 4:24-30
- The Apostle Paul - Colossians 1:9-12; Ephesians 1:1-23
- The Church Triumphant - Revelation 4:8-5:14

Truly, prayer is THE WAY to see God work in ways that are exceeding, abundantly above all that we can even imagine.... if we pray in faith and from the Biblical perspective.

J.C. Ryle, in his book entitled *PRACTICAL RELIGION*, says that "prayer is the most important subject in practical religion." He gives seven reasons for this proposal. Note the following:

1. Prayer is absolutely needful to a man's salvation.
2. A habit of prayer is one of the surest marks of a true Christian.
3. There is no duty in religion so neglected as private prayer.
4. Prayer is that act of religion to which there is the greatest encouragement.
5. Diligence in prayer is the secret of personal holiness.
6. Neglect of prayer is one great cause of backsliding.
7. Prayer is one of the best recipes for happiness and contentment.

Certainly, those seven proposals Mr. Ryle gives are very much worth our consideration. Take some time to meditate upon them as you can.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

There is no single and conclusive definition of prayer given in the Bible. However, the concept of prayer is all through the Scriptures. The Bible uses the word *PRAYER* or expresses prayer in 61 of the 66 books of the Word of God with close to 1,100 distinct references to prayer in various ways. Actual prayers are recorded in 57 of the 66 books of the Bible. In the Pentateuch alone, 58 prayers are recorded. In the historical books, there are 70 prayers recorded. In the poetic books, there are 50 prayers, apart from the Psalms that are filled with prayer after prayer. In the prophets, there are 56 prayers recorded. A total of 242 prayers are found in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, prayers are recorded in 20 of the 27 books. In fact, there are 15 recorded prayers of Jesus Christ. The Gospels contain 55 prayers, and Luke and Acts contain 31 prayers. In the Pauline Epistles, there are 23 recorded prayers. In the General Epistles, there are 16 recorded prayers, and in the Book of the Revelation, there are 9 prayers recorded.

You cannot read the Bible without finding prayer, not merely the topic of prayer, but actual recorded prayers. Prayer is God's idea and God teaches a lot about prayer in His Word. Therefore, it behooves us, as God's children, to learn as much about prayer as we can through study and personal practice.

I have often defined prayer in the following way:

"Prayer is the communion (fellowship) of the believer's heart with God that is conducted through praise, petition, intercession, supplication and waiting upon the Lord that has the goal to glorify God in all things."

NOTE: Once the above is conducted in prayer, one must then *LISTEN FOR GOD TO SPEAK* if prayer is to be complete and effective.

Someone else has defined prayer in the following way:

"Prayer is an intimate dialogue with the Lord for the purposes of:

- *Learning from Him*
- *Learning about Him*

- *Seeking His Wisdom*
- *Seeking His Provision*
- *Understanding His Will*
- *Fellowshipping with Him*
- *Worshipping Him*

PRAYER IS THE ROOT OF A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- In Prayer, one strengthens and deepens his relationship with God
- In Prayer, one must be transparent, honest and open to God in every area of life
- In Prayer, one must listen to God which takes focus, concentration and training (Note Ecclesiastes 5:1,2)

AN OBSERVATION: *How you view the Lord will affect the content of your prayer. What you say to God in prayer, reveals what you think about Him.*

A REVEALING QUESTION: *Do you pray to learn MORE ABOUT GOD, discover HIS awesome plans for your life and worship Him OR do you pray to list all YOUR DESIRES AND THINGS you want HIM to do for you?*

TALKING TO GOD IN PRAYER

True prayer involves COMMUNICATION and INTIMATE DIALOGUE with God which results in a close relationship with Him. How does one COMMUNICATE with and have INTIMATE DIALOGUE with God that builds such a close relationship? CONSIDER THE WORD “ACTS.”

- A = Adoration – Worshipping, praising and exalting God.
- C = Confession – Confessing personal sin.
- T = Thanksgiving – Giving thanks for what God will do in prayer.
- S = Supplication – Praying earnestly until God answers the prayer.

Talking to God in prayer involves at least THREE CATEGORIES:

1) Talking to God about His business

- The Church
- Missions
- Evangelism
- Edification
- Etc.

2) Talking to God about the Needs of others

- Their Spiritual Needs
- Their Physical Needs
- Their Emotional Needs
- Their Social Needs
- Their Financial Needs
- Etc.

- 3) Talking to God about Personal Needs
 - Relating to God's Will for your Life
 - Relating to a Holy Life
 - Relating to Victory over Personal Sin
 - Etc.

OBSERVATION: Always feel free to talk to God about anything that is on your heart and in your mind. God is the ONLY ONE Who knows all about you and how to lead you through the varied circumstances of life. As you talk to God, do not fail to LISTEN TO GOD so as to receive His direction and instruction.

LISTENING TO GOD IN PRAYER

True prayer involves LISTENING TO GOD during and after talking to God occurs. Someone once said: "*THE MOST IMPORTANT TIME IN OUR PRAYER LIFE IS ONE MINUTE AFTER THE AMEN.*" The problem with prayer is that most people talk to God but then do not give God the time to speak in response to the prayer requests.

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT LISTENING TO GOD:

- 1) When we ask God the Father if there is anything He wants us to do, we must then listen to Him speak to us.
- 2) When we stop short of listening for God to speak to us, our Christian life will remain uninspired, unremarkable and spiritually weak.
- 3) When we listen to God and obey Him, He takes us places and does things through us that defy imagination.

AN ILLUSTRATION: Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.

DOES GOD STILL SPEAK TO HIS PEOPLE IN PRAYER?

In the Old Testament times, we read that God clearly spoke to His children directly and through the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). In the days when Jesus was on the earth, God spoke through the teaching of His Beloved Son (Hebrews 1:2). In the early days of the Church Age, God spoke through the teaching of the Apostles (Ephesians 3:1-10). But, does God speak to His people today and if so HOW?

THE ANSWER: *YES, GOD STILL SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE AND DOES SO CLEARLY TO THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO HEAR HIM SPEAK. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:*

- God wants His people to do His will and it would be out of character for Him to hide His will from us by not speaking to us.

- God will move Heaven and Earth to show us His will.
- Hearing God speak to us is dependent upon our anticipating and expecting Him to speak and then paying attention to His instruction. Our approach should always be: *THE LORD HAS SOMETHING TO SAY TO ME AND I AM NOT GOING TO MISS IT.*

HEARING FROM GOD THROUGH PRAYER

Many believers who truly love the Lord and pray and desire to do the will of God struggle in hearing from God through prayer. Consequently, their prayer life is empty, lacks excitement and is ineffective. God never intended it to be that way. Since prayer is a time of COMMUNION FELLOWSHIP and DIALOGUE with God, by its very nature and concept, TWO-WAY CONVERSATION in prayer is required if an intimate relationship with God is to be experienced. So, the question then becomes, HOW DO WE HEAR FROM GOD THROUGH PRAYER? Consider the following:

- Most of us are *PASSIVE LISTENERS*, not only when it comes to listening to God, but even in listening to other humans.
- Most of us will *LISTEN BUT WE DO NOT HEAR*. This is true in all conversation, both divine and human.
- Most of us *REALLY MISS OUT* on what God wants to say to us, not due to God's fault, but because of our own fault. WE DO NOT EFFECTIVELY LISTEN.

AN OBSERVATION: *IN PRAYER AND BIBLE READING, WE MUST HEAR – NOT PASSIVELY BUT ACTIVELY. IN PRAYER AND BIBLE READING, WE MUST CONSTANTLY ASK: “LORD, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING TO ME?”* Consider James 1:22-25.

AN ADMONITION: *IN PRAYER AND BIBLE READING, WE MUST LISTEN INTENTLY WITH THE PURPOSE OF LEARNING, UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING TRUTH TO OUR LIVES.*

A STUDY TO CONSIDER: Take some time to study what the Bible has to say about *SPIRITUAL versus CARELESS hearing.*

Spiritual Hearing

- 1) Proverbs 8:34 – *“Blessed is the one that HEARETH me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”*
- 2) Proverbs 15:31 – *“The ear that HEARETH the reproof of life abideth among the wise.”*
- 3) Ecclesiastes 5:1 – *“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God and be more ready to HEAR than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.”*

4) Habakkuk 3:2 – *“O Lord, I have HEARD thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”*

5) James 1:19 – *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to HEAR, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”*

6) Revelation 2:11 – *“He that hath an ear, let him HEAR what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

Careless Hearing

1) Ezekiel 33:32 – *“And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they HEAR thy words, but they do them not.”*

2) Matthew 7:26 – *“And every one that HEARETH these sayings of mine, and DOETH them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.”*

3) Matthew 13:19 – *“When any one HEARETH the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.”*

4) James 1:23,24 – *“For if any be a HEARER of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgeth what manner of man he was.”*

Essentials To Hearing From God

1) Ask God to speak to you as you begin to pray. Quote 1 Samuel 3:9 that says: *“SPEAK, LORD; FOR YOUR SERVANT HEARS.”*

2) Have an open mind and heart to what God wants to say.

3) Listen to even the random thoughts that come into your mind.

4) Compare what you are hearing with what the Bible says.

5) Immediately begin to APPLY and OBEY what God has spoken.

QUESTION: WHY DOES GOD SPEAK TO US?

1) To build an intimate relationship with Him.

2) To communicate His will to us and to empower us to carry out His will.

3) To grow and mature spiritually.

- 4) To liberate us from sin, bondage and fear.
- 5) To fill us with peace.
- 6) To protect us from Satan.

HOW TO TRIUMPH IN PRAYER

- 1) Become a good LISTENER in every prayer that is offered.
- 2) Pray REGULARLY in private and without interruption.
- 3) As you pray, do not ignore anything that comes into your mind.
- 4) Have your Bible open and read through it, meditate upon it and reflect upon it as you pray.
- 5) Ask God for verification that what you are considering is accurate and in accordance with the Scripture.
- 6) Approach every time of prayer with the goal to obey God.
- 7) At times, pray with others who love the Lord and as thoughts come to your mind, discuss them and trust God to teach you and to lead you to understanding His will.
- 8) Seek God EXPECTANTLY, that is, EXPECT GOD TO SPEAK TO YOU. (Jeremiah 33:3)
- 9) Wait PATIENTLY before God and keep praying until you hear from the Lord. (Daniel 2)
- 10) Be DILIGENT and DO NOT QUIT OR GIVE UP in prayer. (Luke 18:1-14)

A TRUTH TO REMEMBER: *JESUS IS PRAYING FOR YOU AS YOU ARE PRAYING TO GOD*
– Luke 22:32; Hebrews 7:25

PRACTICAL FACTS ON EFFECTIVE PRAYER

- 1) Prayer is God's Idea – Jeremiah 33:3
- 2) Prayer must be Practiced Biblically – Luke 11:1-4
- 3) Prayer must be rendered through Faith – James 1:5-8
- 4) Prayer that is biblically based is Always to God – Acts 12:5
- 5) Prayer is Welcomed by God – Hebrews 10:19-22

PRACTICAL RESULTS OF BIBLICAL PRAYER

- 1) Prayer will ALWAYS change lives to the Glory of God.
- 2) Prayer will ALWAYS unite true Believers.
- 3) Prayer will ALWAYS advance the Gospel.
- 4) Prayer will ALWAYS prevent Spiritual Failure.
- 5) Prayer will ALWAYS defeat Satan.
- 6) Prayer will ALWAYS honor God.
- 7) Prayer will ALWAYS result in God's Blessings.

A LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY PRAYER 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

A Christian who prays biblically and according to the will of God will be spiritually fruitful, spiritually strong, spiritually mature and spiritually effective. The opposite is true of a Christian who does not pray biblically. The reason why so many Christians are spiritually fruitless, spiritually weak, spiritually immature and spiritually ineffective is because they are not praying biblically and according to the will of God. The serious thing for every child of God to consider is that **A LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY PRAYER IS A PERSONAL CHOICE OF PERSONAL OBEDIENCE.**

A life that is **CHARACTERIZED BY PRAYER** is one in which **PRAYER IS ALWAYS** in the front of the mind, on the tip of the tongue and in the pulse of the heart. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says "*PRAY WITHOUT CEASING,*" and truly describes a **LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY PRAYER.** Such a life is one that is **QUICK TO PRAY IN ALL SITUATIONS** not just in emergencies. In fact, the phrase "*WITHOUT CEASING*" in our English Bible is just one word in the Greek New Testament that describes *A CONTINUAL REPEATED ACTION* like that of whooping cough. In fact, the literal translation of the verse is "*UNCEASINGLY PRAY.*"

To 'PRAY WITHOUT CEASING' does not mean to pray *repetitiously or continually without a break, but to pray PERSISTENTLY as in Luke 11:1-13, 18:1-8 and REGULARLY as in Ephesians 6:18 and Colossians 4:2 and 12.*

Certain QUALITIES prevail in a LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY PRAYER including the following:

- 1) Such a life BELIEVES in prayer – *The Power and Purpose of Prayer.*
- 2) Such a life EXPERIENCES prayer – *The Effect of Prayer.*
- 3) Such a life OBEYS in prayer – *The Command and Importance of Prayer.*
- 4) Such a life WALKS in prayer – *The Step by Step use of Prayer.*
- 5) Such a life LIVES in prayer – *The Personalization of Prayer.*
- 6) Such a life TRUSTS in prayer – *The Outcome of Prayer.*
- 7) Such a life DEPENDS upon prayer – *The Strength of Prayer.*
- 8) Such a life TESTIFIES of prayer – *The Blessing of Prayer.*
- 9) Such a life EXEMPLIFIES prayer – *The Constant use of Prayer.*
- 10) Such a life TEACHES prayer – *The Concept of Prayer to Others.*

E. M. Bounds said of the “Prince of Preachers” Charles Haddon 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 with the 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.*” THAT IS THE DESCRIPTION OF A LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY PRAYER.

MAKING PRAYER EFFECTIVE IN YOUR LIFE

Prayer is the MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL God has given to His children. The MORE we properly use and activate prayer the MORE the POWER OF GOD will be seen in our lives. So, to use the EFFECTIVE TOOL OF PRAYER EFFECTIVELY, consider the following:

- 1) Prayer must be PRACTICED, not just MENTIONED.
– Jeremiah 33:3
- 2) Prayer must be PERFORMED by the TRUE Child of God.
– Proverbs 15:29; John 9:31
- 3) Prayer must be PATTERNED after the Model of Christ’s Prayer.
– Luke 11:1-4

- 4) Prayer must be PERSISTENT in order to be Productive.
- Luke 11:5-10
- 5) Prayer must be PROCLAIMED from a Forgiving Heart
– Mark 11:25
- 6) Prayer must be PURE if it is to be Powerful
– 1 Timothy 2:8

AN EXAMPLE OF PRAYER THAT WORKED ACTS 12:1-19

- 1) Prayer is to God Alone – Vs. 5
 - “Prayer was made without ceasing of the church UNTO GOD.”
- 2) Prayer to God Moves God to Work – Vss. 6-7a
 - “The Angel of the Lord came upon him.”
- 3) Prayer to God Releases from Bondage – Vs. 7b
 - “His chains fell off from his hands.”
- 4) Prayer to God Provides Direction – Vss. 8-10
 - “Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals.”
- 5) Prayer to God Requires Obedience – Vss. 8-10
 - “And so he Did” Vs. 8
 - “And he went Out” Vs. 9
- 6) Prayer to God Clarifies God’s Will – Vss. 8-10
 - “Wist not that it was True” – Vs. 9a
 - “But thought he saw a Vision” – Vs. 9b
 - “Now I know for Surety” – Vs. 11
- 7) Prayer to God Sees God at Work – Vs. 11
 - “The Lord hath sent His angel and hath delivered me”
- 8) Prayer to God Brings Surprises – Vss.12-16
 - “She opened not the door for gladness” – Vs. 14
 - “They said unto her, Thou art mad” – Vs. 15
 - “They were astonished” – Vs. 16
- 9) Prayer to God Generates a Witness – Vs.17
 - “Declared unto them how the Lord brought him out of prison.”

- 10) Prayer to God Stirs up the Observers – Vss. 18, 19
- “No small stir among the Soldiers”

THE BLESSING OF PRAYER JEREMIAH 33:3

- 1) The Personalities of Prayer – *“Call Unto Me”*
- God Himself
 - God’s Children
- 2) The Promise of Prayer – *“I Will Answer Thee”*
- God’s Promise to All of His Children
- 3) The Prospect of Prayer – *“Great and Mighty Things Which Thou Knowest Not”*
- Things that are Great - In Precept and Power.
 - Things that are Mighty – Hidden and Inaccessible.
 - Things that are Not Known – Beyond Imagination.

NOTE: *God promises to Jeremiah – and to us – that He will answer prayer and will reveal the knowledge of certain things for His children who accept God’s invitation to pray and who pray effectively.*

CERTAIN SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER

The child of God may pray for anything and everything that comes into his mind. (Note Philippians 4:6) The Bible gives a few specific items for prayer after which we should craft our prayers.

- 1) For Laborers to be Sent into the Mission Field
- Matthew 9:37,38
 - Acts 13:1-3
- 2) For All People and Those in Authority
- 1 Timothy 2:1-4

3) For the Knowledge of His Will

- Colossians 1:9-12

4) For those who Use Us

- Matthew 5:44

PITFALLS OF PRAYER
JAMES 4:3

NOTE: There are times when we ask in prayer, but the answer is hindered or limited because of our own personal condition. James says that at times we will ask and not receive because we ask “amiss” which involves *wrong attitudes, wrong motives and wrong desires. PRAYER THAT IS NOT ANSWERED DIRECTLY, CLEARLY OR COMPLETELY IS NOT GOD’S FAULT IN NOT KEEPING HIS PROMISES BUT RATHER IS OUR FAULT BY NOT APPROACHING HIM PROPERLY IN PRAYER.*

Some Specific Pitfalls of Prayer

1) By Harboring Iniquity – Psalm 66:18

- “Iniquity” means *being out of line with God’s standards or distorting that which is proper and correct.*

2) By Showing Indifference to God’s Work – Proverbs 1:24-29

- By Refusing God’s Call – Vs. 24a
- By Refusing God’s Pleading – Vs. 24b
- By Refusing God’s Counsel – Vs. 25a
- By Refusing God’s Correction – Vs. 25b
- By Refusing God’s Wisdom – Vs. 29
- By Refusing God’s Respect – Vs. 29

3) By Neglecting Mercy – Proverbs 21:13

- Refusing to give mercy is a serious matter in Christian living.

4) By Despising God’s Law – Proverbs 28:9

- Maintaining any improper attitude or action that violates Scripture.

5) By Empty Formalism – Isaiah 1:10-17

- Simply going through the motions of prayer without genuineness of heart.

6) By Wavering Faith – James 1:1-8

- Lacking the belief that God will answer.

NOTE: *God loves to have us pray and He loves to answer and bless us through prayer, but Biblical attitudes and actions must be in order before we can expect God to work in and through us in prayer.*

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER
MARK 11:22-25

NOTE: Mark 11:22-25 presents one of the most direct and clearest instructions on prayer in the Gospels. In the text, Jesus promises that with “*FAITH IN GOD*” great things can and will be accomplished through the tool of prayer. In verses 24 and 25 alone, Jesus gives *EIGHT GREAT PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER TO CONSIDER*.

1) Principle One: The Authority of Prayer – “*I SAY*”

- Jesus Christ is the Authority of prayer Who is giving us the invitation to pray.

2) Principle Two: The Participant of Prayer – “*UNTO YOU*”

- True and obedient believers in Jesus Christ.

3) Principle Three: The Product of Prayer – “*WHATSOEVER THINGS*”

- Anything that relates to Christian living (John 15:7,16) through the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Romans 8:26,27) with the proper motive (James 4:1-4) and according to the Will of God (1 John 5:14,15).

4) Principle Four: The Need of Prayer – “*YE DESIRE*”

- Including Spiritual Protection (Matthew 6:11-13), Daily Needs (Matthew 6:25-34) and the Concerns of Others (1 Timothy 2:1).

5) Principle Five: The Reality of Prayer – “*WHEN YE PRAY*”

- Prayer is to be a Regular part of our lives – 1 Thessalonians 5:17
- Prayer is to be a Remedy for our anxiety – Philippians 4:6,7

6) Principle Six: The Key to Prayer – “*BELIEVE*”

- This involves FAITH in the All-Powerful God – Mark 9:23

7) Principle Seven: The Outcome of Faith – “*YE SHALL HAVE THEM*”

- The Unconditional Promise of God – Jeremiah 33:3
- The Unlimited Provision of God - Matthew 7:7,8

8) Principle Eight: The Stipulation for Prayer – “*FORGIVE*”

- A Practical fact that Cannot be Denied – Matthew 6:14,15

NOTE: *Prayer is a wonderful tool and privilege given to us from God Himself, but if it is to be effective, it must be guided by the divine principles set forth in the Word of God, not by human concepts and ideas.*

PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Often you will hear people praying TO the Holy Spirit, but as you search the Scriptures on prayer and the Holy Spirit, no where will you find an exhortation to pray TO Him. You will, however, find an exhortation to pray IN the Holy Spirit. What is the difference and why is this important?

- Praying “TO” the Holy Spirit means that we are asking Him to ANSWER the prayers we are rendering.
- Praying “IN” the Holy Spirit means that we are DEPENDING upon the Holy Spirit to lead and guide our prayers according to the will of God.

OBSERVATION: *The correct Biblical approach to prayer and the Holy Spirit is that we are to pray TO God the Father IN the name of God the Son through the DIRECTION of God the Holy Spirit. Without the clear aid and direction of the Holy Spirit, our prayers would NEVER BE PROPER BEFORE THE FATHER.*

Consider the Following:

1) The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Supplication” in our Prayer.

– Zechariah 12:10

- This means that the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf and is the source of many of our prayers. In fact, He tells us when to pray, why to pray and for what to pray. When the Holy Spirit leads us to pray, no matter where we are and no matter what we are doing, we should pause right there and pray so as not to *grieve* Him (Ephesians 4:30), *quench* Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19) or make Him *envious* (James 4:5).

2) The Holy Spirit is the “Intercessor in our Prayer.”

– Romans 8:26, 27

- This means that the Holy Spirit *fashions our prayers* according to the will of God.

3) The Holy Spirit “Guides” us into All Truth” in our Prayer.

– John 16:13

- This means that the Holy Spirit leads us into the specific elements of prayer, that is, who to pray for, what to pray for, etc. This is to guarantee that our prayers are accurate from the Biblical perspective so as to Glorify God.

AN INFORMATIONAL NOTE: The teaching of Christ according to John 14:13, 14 is that we are to pray “IN HIS NAME.” What does this actually mean? For sure, it is NOT just some kind of a magic formula with which to end our prayer, but praying in THE NAME OF JESUS involves the following:

- That we recognize and understand the ONLY way we can approach the Father is because of the work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary that has cleansed us from our sin and has granted us the privilege of going before God's Throne of Grace.
– Hebrews 10:19-22
- That it is because of the work and power of Jesus Christ that we can expect our prayers to be effective.
– Romans 5:1,2
- That we understand that we are coming before the Father under the authority of Jesus Christ asking for our prayers to be answered due to the work of Christ on the Cross.
– Ephesians 2:18
- That we are praying, not according to our own will and desire, but rather in line with the will of God.
– 1 John 5:14,15
- That we are praying with the motive of honoring and glorifying God and not for personal exaltation.
– James 4:3

A RELATED QUESTION: *Why do we end our prayers with the word "AMEN?"*

THE ANSWER: In both the Hebrew and the Greek languages, the word "AMEN" means "SO BE IT." In addition, in the Old Testament there are at least 7 references that link the word "AMEN" with PRAISE such as seen in 1 Chronicles 16:36. Therefore, when we end our prayer with "AMEN," and we should, we are saying, "SO BE IT AND PRAISE THE LORD" for what He is going to do.

This study is in no way intended to be an exhaustive presentation on prayer. In fact, that would be impossible for me to do. Neither is it to give you the impression that I have mastered the practice of prayer in my personal life. For, believe me, I have not done so. It is designed with the intent to give you a basic understanding of *the power, the purpose, the person, the process, the pitfalls, and the prospect of prayer*. I pray that to a certain extent this has been achieved.

The longer I live, the more I realize that NOTHING CAN EVER TAKE THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN LIFE AND SERVICE. Therefore, I pray that you will grow in your understanding and practice of prayer so as to exalt God and see Him work in your life for His glory.

My final challenge is to encourage you to take every opportunity you can to advance your prayer life privately and publicly. Pray more alone. Pray more with others. Pray more as you go throughout your day. Attend every prayer meeting you possibly can. Change your schedule to include more personal, private and public prayer. The more you advance in your prayer life, the more you will see the power of God, sense the presence of God and experience the purpose of God in your life.

AMEN AND PRAISE BE TO GOD!

“WHEN YOU PRAY”
MATTHEW 6:5-13

(A LESSON ON PRAYER FROM THE LIPS OF CHRIST)

- I. BE GENUINE – VS. 5**
- II. BE SINGLE-MINDED – VS. 6**
- III. BE THOUGHTFUL – VSS. 7,8**
- IV. BE WORSHIPFUL – VS. 9**
- V. BE SUBMISSIVE – VS. 10**
- VI. BE SPECIFIC – VS. 11**
- VII. BE FORGIVING – VS. 12**
- VIII. BE DEPENDENT – VS. 13A**
- IX. BE EXALTING – VS. 13B**

CONDITIONS TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER

SALVATION

1 Peter 3:12

SPIRITUAL CLEANLINESS

Psalm 66:18

FAITH IN GOD

James 1:6

WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS

Jeremiah 29:13

OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD

1 John 3:22

FORGIVENESS

Mark 11:25,26

ABIDING IN CHRIST

John 15:7

LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 8:26,27

PROPER MOTIVES

James 4:3

IN CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

John 14:14

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