

## Prayer Is For Every Believer

This Week's Prayer Requests:

**Memory Verse:** 1 Thess. 5:17 - "Pray without ceasing."

In Hugh Price Hughes' story, the "City of Everywhere," a man arrived in a city one cold morning. As he got off the train, the station was like any other station with the crowds and redcaps, except that everybody was barefooted. They wore no shoes. He noticed the cab driver was barefooted. "Pardon me," he asked the driver, "I was just wondering why you don't wear shoes. Don't you believe in shoes?"

"Sure we do," said the driver.

"Why don't you wear them?"

"Ah, that's the question," came the reply. "Why don't we wear shoes? Why don't we?"

At the hotel it was the same. The clerk, bell boys, everybody was barefooted. In the coffee shop he noticed a nice-looking fellow at a table opposite him who was also barefooted. He said, "I notice you aren't wearing any shoes. I wonder why? Don't you know about shoes?"

The man replied, "Of course I know about shoes."

"Then why don't you wear them?"

"Ah, that's the question. Why don't we? Why don't we?"

After breakfast he walked out on the street in the snow but every person he saw was barefooted. He asked another man about it, and pointed out how shoes protect the feet from cold. The man said, "We know about shoes. See that building yonder? That is a shoe factory. We are proud of that plant and every week we gather there to hear the man in charge tell about shoes and how wonderful they are."

"Then why don't you wear shoes?"

"Ah, that's the question."

Don't we believe in prayer, Beloved? Don't we know what it could mean in our lives? Don't we know how wonderful prayer can be? Then why don't we pray? That's the question ... why don't we?"

Prayer is the heart and soul of every successful relationship with God. In fact, prayer is absolutely crucial to every area of a believer's life. To illustrate the point, consider the following questions:

How did you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior?

How do you abide in Christ and allow Him to live His life through you?

How would you describe your prayer life? What do you want your prayer life to be?

How crucial is prayer to living the Christian life?

How do you grow as a Christian?

How do you overcome temptation and weakness?

How do you resist Satan and wage effective spiritual warfare?

How do you confess your sins?

How are you filled with the Holy Spirit?

How do you obtain guidance and wisdom from God?

How do you experience the power to serve God effectively?

Prayer is a key part of the answer to every single one of these questions. Indeed, prayer is essential to every part of our relationship with God as John 15:7 makes clear, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

In view of the awesome importance of prayer, we may confidently say this, “No one’s relationship with Christ will ever rise above the level of his or her praying.” Put simply, if your prayer life is inconsistent and weak, so will your relationship with God be. But take heart, I believe that all of us, by God’s grace, can develop dynamic prayer lives. And when we learn to walk in daily prayer, God will transform us completely.

How should you approach prayer?

Now, because we live in a busy day of sound bites and micro-managed time slots, many believers have begun to approach prayer in a rushed, highly programmed manner. Yet God is definitely calling His people back to the biblical pattern of significant time with Him through daily prayer. He is calling us back to dynamic spiritual cleansing and an intimate walk with Himself.

What are some key purposes that God has for prayer?

We need to learn to view prayer from God’s perspective. In fact, we will never fully understand prayer until we grasp God’s purposes for prayer. We must stop viewing prayer simply as a means to get our needs met. Far more than just meeting needs, prayer is God’s primary means of our coming to know Him, worship Him, glorify Him and experience transformation through the indwelling Spirit. As Christians, we are called the very Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9). Through prayer and Scripture, God is preparing us for the great wedding soon to come. He is readying us to rule and reign with Him forever.

Prayer is not primarily about what we can get out of God, but what He purposes to do in and through us for His own pleasure. Prayer is a major way we come to know Him and hear His voice. Through prayer, we abide in Him and allow Him to live through us. Prayer is how Christ purifies His Bride and builds His Kingdom. **The great secret** of prayer is to align ourselves to God's purposes rather than seeking to align Him to ours.

### **What God Accomplishes Through Effective Prayer:<sup>1</sup>**

Do you view prayer as a way of coming to know God better? Why or why not? How can a person change his or her prayer life to accomplish this goal?

#### **1. Your relationship with Him becomes more real and personal.**

Scripture declares that a believer's greatest priority is to personally know God and love Him with all his heart. Matthew 22:37 - "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'"

John 17:3 tells us, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Above everything else, God desires a close personal relationship with each of His children. Yet, it is impossible to develop this relationship without spending significant time with God. Prayer is the primary way you spend meaningful time with the Lord. Through prayer, God purposes to establish and deepen your personal relationship with Him.

#### **2. You experience ever-deepening holiness and growth in Christ-likeness.**

There is no such thing as becoming more like Christ, growing in the faith, or living a new and transformed life, that is not centered in fervent prayer and hearing the word of God. If you do not learn to spend significant time in prayer and Scripture, your growth and Christian walk will be stunted and you will not experience a powerful transformation of life. But, if you do learn to pray as God teaches in the Scripture, then God will radically fill you with His own holiness, purity and character. What do I mean by significant time? I mean an essential commitment to meet with God that goes beyond a three or four minute daily devotion and perfunctory prayers.

### **3. Your ability to clearly understand God’s ways and His working in your life rises dramatically**

Have you ever prayed for wisdom as James 1:5 admonishes? What happened?

James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

Jeremiah 29:12-13, “Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me will all your heart.”

God promises clear direction and wisdom to those who seriously seek His help and direction. To put it simply, if a believer consistently seeks God’s face, he finds Him! Unless you spend yourself in regular prayer, God’s wisdom and working will be difficult to discern. Without much time in prayer, you will be spiritually “hard of hearing” and God will often seem distant.

### **4. The spiritual power of your life and ministry increases greatly**

John 14:13-14 says, “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

What does it mean to pray in Jesus’ name?

This verse, of course, is not a blanket promise for you to abuse prayer and use it as a license for pursuing worldliness. Such prayer is not “in His name,” does not refer to a simple formula of words tacked on to the end of prayer, but refers to being in accord with His spirit, His character, His purposes and with a view to His glory and honor. God does not honor prayers that are “amiss” that you may receive blessing simply to “spend it on your own pleasure” (James 4:3). But with this warning in mind, think for a moment about the majesty of what the Lord is actually promising in these verses. Neither is this great promise simply limited to the immediate disciples whom Jesus addressed as 1 John 5:14-15 makes clear.

Where there is little prayer, there is little power. Conversely, where there is much prayer, there is much power for those things that honor Christ. Unfortunately, many people are excellent organizers, good promoters, and brilliant strategists, but few are powerful prayer warriors. In effect, we have totally reversed the practice and priority of the early church. We do everything else far more than we pray, while the New Testament church prayed far more than they did anything else. Consequently, the early church rapidly evangelized their world, while

our churches have been in an alarming decline.

Have you experienced any answered prayers recently? What happened?

### **5. You experience the joy of answered prayer.**

2 Chronicles 7:14, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

When believers truly humble themselves, repent, pray and earnestly seek God’s face, their prayers take on far greater power and effectiveness. You will notice many answers to prayer. However, it is only through the constant cleansing and contrition before God that our prayers have mountain-moving power. Conversely, it is only through much time in prayer and confession that we maintain this spirit of humility and continue to walk in Holy Spirit. Failure to confession in sincerity and earnestly seek the face of God is the primary reason many believers see few answered prayers.

Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”

Isaiah 59:1-2, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

Consider 2 Cor. 10:2-4. What are the weapons of our warfare?

### **6. You have greater power to withstand trials, temptations, and spiritual attacks.**

Ephesians 6:13, 18, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore ... praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”

Prayer is the way we put on the “whole armor of God.” It is the essential way we wage spiritual warfare and take every thought captive to Christ. When our prayer life is weak or inconsistent, our spiritual defenses are down. The more consistently one prays, the greater will be his or her ability to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. The less one prays, the greater his or her vulnerability to sin, Satan and worldliness.

### **7. You learn to pray more effectively for the lost.**

Praying for the lost should be a serious concern for every believer. It is a natural overflow of genuine love. In Ezek. 22:30 God says, “So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.” Are you willing to stand in the gap on behalf of those who do not know the Lord? Who do you know without Christ, that you could be praying for today?

### **8. You learn to pray effectively for revival and spiritual awakening in your own life, church, city and nation.**

Though most believers are burdened for America, few of us know how to intercede effectively for our land. When our prayers become biblical and specific, though, they take on far greater power. Rather than feeling helpless, we should remember that the whole world has been impacted in times past and is being impacted today by ordinary believers who have become powerful intercessors.

It is high time for us, as believers, to grow into full maturity as the Lord’s disciples. Our churches and our land are in desperate need of another Great Awakening, but it can only come if ordinary believers commit to serious prayer. Moreover, we personally will never experience the full power and joy of the Christian life, until we become serious about prayer. Let us stop settling for a shallow walk with Christ when God saved us to experience all the fullness of His daily presence.

This list certainly isn’t exhaustive. What are some other things God accomplishes through effective prayer?

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1. Outline adapted from Frizell, Gregory R., *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life* (Memphis, TN: The Master Design, 1999), 3-5.