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## Principles of Effective Prayer

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"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

Have you ever had so many needs that you felt like a prophet would have to pray all night to get them taken care of? I have! Shortly after becoming a Christian, I requested prayer for my financial needs. I expected the preacher to make such inspired intercession that everyone would fall on their knees. I imagined him weeping over my problems as Jesus wept over Lazarus' death.

But to my amazement, he merely laid his hand on my chest, bowed his head and said, "Lord, bless him. Meet his every need, in the Name of Jesus." Then he turned and walked away!

What a disappointment! My problems were big! I figured it would take a big prayer to cover them. But you see, I was operating in unbelief, and this man of God was operating in faith. He was concentrating on the answer - Jesus - and not on my problems.

Since then, I've learned a lot about prayer. I've stepped beyond shooting scattershot prayers, just hoping for something to happen, and I've learned to follow the guidelines to prayer that are given in the Word of God. You see, God never meant for us to stumble around in the dark when we pray.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." God intends to answer our requests. He wants us to get results when we pray. But first, we have to put away our childish ideas about prayer and replace them with God's power-packed principles.

For example, one thing we need to learn is that it is not the length of our prayers that gets results. In John 3:22-23 it says, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

Praying all night is not what gets the ear of God; it is believing on and praying in the Name of Jesus. Praying all night is quite an accomplishment but praying in the Name of Jesus is basing your prayer on His accomplishments, not on yours.

Of course, if you haven't been living a life that is pleasing to God, your prayers will be hindered. Disobedience robs you of your confidence in Him, but even then, Jesus is still the answer. He is your Advocate with the Father.

Don't run from God when you sin; run to Him! Act on 1 John 1:9. Confess your sin and receive your forgiveness. Don't let sin and condemnation keep God from moving in your life, your heart and your circumstances. Jesus is faithful and just to forgive you when you repent. He wants to answer your prayers.

Another key to answered prayer is praying according to the will of God. The problem is that many believers are in the dark about God's will. Religion has told us, "You never know what God's going to do." But that's not true! He's told us in His Word exactly what He will do. The written Word brings the will of God out of the realm of obscurity. When we pray in line with the Word, we pray according to the will of God. When we let the Word of God engineer our prayer, "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us:

And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Prayer based on the Word begins with the answer and doesn't concentrate on the problem. Let's take healing as an example. First Peter 2:24 says that by the stripes that Jesus bore, we were healed. Just as in the forgiveness of your sins, your healing was provided for through the cross. If the Word says you were healed, then God's will is for you to be well. Let the Word of God settle the issue once and for all. Throw out all the arguments and believe the Word.

Mark 11:24 says, "What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Notice that it says for you to believe when you pray. Make the decision that God's Word is absolutely true. If God said that you were healed, then believe that you were healed when you prayed, not when you began to feel better.

When you base your prayer on the fact that the answer is already yours, then the only thing left is to begin the application of your faith. Faith is your response to what God has already provided.

Faith is released in two ways: by saying it and by acting on it. If 1 Peter 2:24 says you were healed, then don't say, "I'm sick." Say, "I believe that by the stripes Jesus bore for me, I am healed." And then act like it. Real Bible believing demands action.

If someone came running in your front door and said, "The house is on fire!" and you believed it, you would immediately get out. You wouldn't wait until you saw smoke!

Faith in God's Word works the same way. Don't wait until you feel healed to believe it. Believe it before anything you can see ever happens, or it will never happen. Faith makes prayer work; prayer doesn't make faith work.

If your needs have been piling up, don't panic. Pray! Your spiritual, mental, physical, financial and social needs can be met by the power of Almighty God. Just follow God's principles of prayer and make your requests known unto Him; then start to praise, knowing the results are on the way!

## **Principles of Effective Prayer, Part 2**

Prayer is the foundation of every successful Christian endeavor. Time spent with God is vital if you desire a fruitful Christian life. As the foundation of every Christian endeavor, it plays a vital role in living a successful Christian life.

Study the lives of the great men and women of God from the past and you will see the strong emphasis they placed on prayer. Without prayer, they would never have been able to achieve such tremendous results.

Throughout the New Testament we can see the value of prayer in the founding of the early churches. The Apostle Paul prayed and interceded many hours for the new believers. In Ephesians 1:15-16 he wrote: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

In Colossians 1:3 he said: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 he instructed the Church to "pray without ceasing."

Luke 18:1 says, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

It is not enough to know that we should pray. We need to know why. Look at Ephesians 4:14-16: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by

that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Compare the Body of Christ to a brick building. The bricks would topple in the breeze if they were not joined together. Mortar forms those bricks into a solid, impenetrable wall. However, it is held together, or made useful, by the effectual working in the measure of every part.

The power of love, through prayer and intercession, is the mortar which knits the Body together. Each member contributes his part by building up the Body and strengthening it through prayer. If one is injured or weakened in some way, the others are able to stand in prayer and make up for that weakness.

Faith causes your prayers to bring results. Faith pleases God (Heb. 11:6). It pleases Him to answer your prayers. He can only manifest Himself in the earth through the believer who is operating in faith. However, there will be no strong faith without a deep and intimate fellowship with the Father.

This is the very heart of a successful prayer life. Fellowship is the mother of faith. You can only put your faith and confidence in God to the extent that you know Him. By spending time in fellowship with Him, you will become personally acquainted with your heavenly Father.

Your new birth into the family of God gave you the right to expect your prayers to be answered. You came into a Father-child relationship. Relationship without fellowship, however, is like marriage without love. In a loveless marriage, two people are related but don't really know each other.

If I never spent quality time in fellowship with my son, anyone could tell him lies about me and he would believe them. The same thing applies to a husband and wife, an employer and an employee, business partners, etc. Lack of fellowship causes lack of trust.

If that can happen in human relationships it can happen between my heavenly Father and me. By not spending time in fellowship with God, you will come to a place where Satan could lie to you about God - he would say God is your problem or He is the One making you sick to teach you something. You will believe it. You will not have a personal experience with the Father, called trust (faith), that refuses the lies of Satan called doubt (unbelief). Consequently, you will not resist those lies but begin to accept them as truth.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusts in thee" (Isa. 26:3).

God is NOT your problem. The more you fellowship with Him, the more you know that He is FOR you. He wants to use His power in your behalf.

Galatians 1:3-4 says, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."

The number one priority in God's heart is to spend quality time with us every day. As believers, we need to be able to hear His voice and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We have the command to resist anything that does not come from Him (James 4:7). God does not want us lacking in any area of our lives.

Fellowship is so vitally important. It will cause you to operate out of your spirit where the faith and power of God reside. Mere head knowledge of the Word, or what is called mental assent, will not cause you to tap into the power of God.

Mental assent is simply agreeing that God's Word is true. On the other hand, fellowship will bring you to a place of operating out of revelation knowledge. When you know, that you know, that you know, that God's promise is good, nothing can take it away from you! All fear and doubt are dispelled.

By maintaining a consistent and close fellowship with God, you will bear fruit in your life. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:4-5,7).

Jesus said "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Bearing fruit is doing the works of Jesus; consequently pleasing the Father. The way to bear fruit is by prayer. Jesus always separated Himself from people to spend time in prayer. He had a personal relationship with the Father. He stayed in tune with the Holy Spirit through fellowship and prayer.

Set aside time every day to spend with your heavenly Father. Make the decision that you will not allow anything to interfere with your quality time alone with Him.

The more time you spend in His presence, the more you will act and think like Him. God has already given you His nature. To fellowship with Him will cause your attitudes, actions, and beliefs to line up. The more time you spend with your Father in the Word, the more your desires will become His desires. Then when you pray, you will simply be voicing His will. The reality of God will burn into your consciousness. You will not be crying out to God 92,000 miles away. He will be right there - closer than a brother. "As you draw nigh unto God, He will draw nigh unto you" (James 4:8).

No danger in this world, no circumstance, no problem can come near you with God Almighty by your side! Spending time in fellowship with God on a personal basis will give birth to a deep, strong faith and trust in His ability. Your prayer life will take on new meaning.

As a born-again believer, you have everything that you need to succeed in this life. God is a winner! You are His very own child. You have been born again to win! When you are praying in faith and confidence, all of heaven's resources are at your disposal! Determine in your heart that you will maintain consistent and intimate fellowship with God so that your prayer life will be based on personal knowledge of Him.

### **Prayer Changes Things**

Always remember that prayer changes things; it does not change God. One of the mighty attributes of God is that He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

What you want to do is take your faith and the Word of God and change the circumstances in your life to line up with His will.

His plans and desires are always for your success and well-being.

Some people think that if they pray long and hard, they will get God to do something for them.

The Word says that God's eyes are over the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers (Ps. 34:15).

If you have made Jesus the Lord of your life, you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. He is already open to your prayers.

Through prayer, you tap into His strength and change the things that are out of line with His will.

### **Praying for Results**

Regardless of any man's ability, he will fail if his endeavors are not backed by prayer. The major cause of failure in Christian enterprises is an omission of prayer. Whether your goal is to witness to one man or to preach the gospel to nations, you will succeed or fail based entirely on your prayer life.

One percent of your time spent in prayer will produce only one percent results. Eighty percent prayer will bring 80 percent results. This formula works every time. The obvious question is, "But how can I expect to receive 100 percent results? I can't spend all of my time in prayer." Oh yes, you can!

Prayer is an attitude. It involves more than just making requests. Prayer is communicating with God. You can live in an attitude of prayer constantly, being in communion and fellowship with your heavenly Father every hour of the day.

In order to get results in prayer, you must be convinced of one basic fact: God wants to answer your prayers. In fact, He is as ready and willing to answer you as He was to answer Jesus during His earthly ministry. This may be difficult for you to believe, but it is true.

I remember how amazed I was to learn about God's willingness to answer my prayers. I had always thought of myself as unworthy. I thought, "Why would God bother to answer my prayers?" Ignorance of God's Word kept me from receiving His best in my life.

Once I realized the importance of the Word of God, my attitude changed. I realized that God does not see His children as unworthy. Notice how Jesus prayed: "that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23). Just think! God loves you and me as much as he loves Jesus! We are worthy!

Knowing that God is ready to answer your prayers will make you serious about your prayer life. Never take your prayer privilege lightly. Because you are a child of God, you have an open invitation from Him to come into the throne room any time you wish.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). You do not have to enter His presence crawling on your hands and knees. You can boldly stand before God without a sense of guilt or shame or condemnation.

### **Three Guarantees for Successful Prayer**

As a believer, especially in these days of God's Glory, you need to constantly remind yourself that prayer is not just something religious. God gave you the gift of prayer for one purpose - to change things in the earth.

Remember, He is just as ready to answer your prayers while you are on this earth as He was to answer the prayers of Jesus while He was in His earthly ministry. And to assure your success in prayer, He has given you the following three guidelines:

**The first guarantee for success in prayer is that if you pray in Jesus' Name, you will have what you ask.**

Jesus tells us that, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (John 16:23) This verse tells us that we should address the Father in Jesus' Name.

Early in my walk as a believer, I thought that effectiveness in prayer was a direct result of how long or how loudly you prayed, or how much pitiful weeping accompanied your prayer. Imagine my surprise when, expecting a preacher to pray a lengthy prayer for my financial needs, I heard him simply pray, "Lord bless him. Meet his every need, in the Name of Jesus." My problems were BIG. I expected a BIG prayer. But this man of faith was concentrating on the answer, Jesus, and not my problem. His confidence was in the authority of Jesus' Name, not in the length of his prayer.

The Name of Jesus carries authority over all other names! Paul wrote, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and

things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11)

How do you get your circumstances to line up with the Word of God? Force them to bow their knees to the Name of Jesus when you pray. Praying in the Name of Jesus bases your prayers on His accomplishments, not yours.

Of course, if you haven't been living a life that is pleasing to God, your prayers will be hindered because disobedience robs you of your confidence in Him. But even then, Jesus is still the answer. Don't let sin and condemnation keep God from moving in your life, your heart and your circumstances. Confess it and receive your forgiveness according to 1 John 1:9.

### **The second guarantee for success in prayer is praying according to the will of God.**

God's will is His Word. Those who will let the Word engineer their prayers have this confidence: "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (1 John 5:14-15)

Not only are we to pray, but we are to believe when we pray. Mark 11:24 says, "What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." So throw out all the arguments and believe the Word. Once you have based your prayer on the fact that the answer is already yours, then you have something to which you can apply your faith. Faith is our response to what God has already provided, and it is released in two ways: by saying it, and by acting on it. If someone came running in your front door and said, "The house is on fire!" and you believed it, you would immediately get out. You wouldn't wait until you saw smoke!

Faith in God's Word works the same way. Don't wait until you feel healed to believe it. Believe it before anything you can see ever happens, or it will never happen. Faith makes prayer work; prayer doesn't make faith work.

### **The third guarantee for success in prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit.**

He is the power arm of God. To see how the Holy Spirit operates, look at Genesis 1:1-3: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light."

We see that the Holy Spirit was present, moving on the face of the waters before creation. But notice that His presence accomplished nothing until God spoke. He exploded into action based on what God said. He brought forth the light with such vigor that it's still radiating through the universe, devouring the darkness at a rate of 186,000 miles per second! Think about that the next time you start to pray about a seemingly impossible situation!

If you're a born-again believer, the Holy Ghost is present inside you, just as He was present on the day of creation. And He responds to God's Word today just as powerfully as He did then. The more faith you have in Him, the more confidence you place in Him, the more awesome the results will be. Think about that! The power that created the universe, the power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead, is activated in your life when you speak the Word of God in prayer. Hallelujah, what a guarantee!

I urge you, from this day forward, to make prayer the bedrock of your life. Build your marriage, your career, and your ministry on it. If you do, and you pray by the guidelines His Word has given you, you have God's guarantee of success!

## **Two Great Hindrances to Prayer**

Two of the greatest hindrances to the believer's prayer life are doubt and unbelief. Although they are similar, they are two different things.

Doubt is the thief of God's greater blessings. It keeps a man in a state of separation from Him.

Some men doubt that there is a God. They doubt that He will perform His Word in response to their prayers. As a result they do not respond to God's Word. This hinders His power in their behalf.

Doubt comes from ignorance of God's Word. For example, so many people have the idea that God will no longer heal. They think that He is not interested in their financial affairs. Consequently, their prayers will be hindered.

**God has given us a way to keep our minds renewed. It is through the knowledge of His Word.** We can fellowship with Him, find out His attitude and act accordingly.

For instance, a man determines that it is God's will to heal him. When he prays according to God's Word, he can be sure God will move in his behalf, thus expelling the force of doubt.

Unbelief is when a man knows there is a God yet does not believe His Word. He knows what the Bible says, but he has chosen to believe what he can see and feel instead. This will definitely hinder his prayer life.

In order to expel doubt and unbelief, you must make God's Word the final authority in every matter. Do not allow what religious tradition says or what you think about it to be the deciding factor.

Pray according to the will of God and believe you receive when you pray. God's Word is His will. He does not will one thing and say something else.

God cannot lie. Refuse to be moved by anything except what God's Word tells you. When you pray, expect things to change. God's Word will not fail.

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