

Study on Prayer

A Meditation for Step 11

Prayer is the ultimate communication between Creator and creation. I believe God hears and answers prayers for children before the age of accountability. But I also believe that when a child reaches an age of understanding, and can make choices between right and wrong, and understands that there are consequences for wrong doing, that is when the Holy Spirit goes to work on behalf of that person to bring them to a place where they will be exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ - that He came to die for the wrong that they had done through sin (either through ignorance or through willful disobedience to God), and that they could receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and be saved for all eternity. No special words are required. It's not about words, but about a conviction of the spirit and the heart, a trust and belief that this Jesus paid the price for us **so that we could communicate with God with a clean soul and conscience.** Our soul must be cleansed from sin in order for us to have communication and fellowship with God, and that cleansing comes only by the blood of Jesus, which will cleanse us from all sin, past, present and future!

So, my beloved, I hope you see just what prayer is and that it is a privilege of those who have been redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ. To God be the glory, and let the redeemed of the Lord say so! The following are some Scriptural requirements and a few "handy hints" that we have used that seemed to draw us closer to God through our prayer life, and aided, I believe, in receiving answers.

1.) We should pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. We can address God as Father, because we have become His children through Jesus Christ (John 1:12). Let Him know that you desire to come close to Him, even to crawl upon His lap, crying, "Abba, Father!" Envision this in your mind in order to feel His presence. Then state on what authority you come before Him (into His throne room), "Father, I come before You in the name of Jesus and in the power of Your Holy Spirit. Father, I have petitions to lay before Your throne of grace."

2.) We must pray God's will. This requires reading His word, the Bible, to find out what His will is, so that we don't waste His and our time on things that could be counted as frivolous prayers. My friend, if we pray according to the promises in His word, we will not have to add on, "If it be Your will?" to the end of our prayers. When we pray knowing His will, we can believe we have received the answer and be confident that our request will bring honor to Him. How could He not answer favorably?

3.) We must pray with right motives, which means not praying with only ourselves in mind. When praying, always explain how the answer to your prayer will bring honor and glory to the Lord, and the furthering of His kingdom. An example of wrong motives in praying might be a wife praying, "Lord, please save my husband, because then he will be a better husband, treat me better, get along with the kids better, and bring home more money." The better motive would be, "God, I want You to save my husband! I pray that he might be all that You want him to be, that he will be the spiritual leader of our household and set a good example for our children, and that **You will be honored and glorified by his life** and the example of obedience he sets."

4.) We must "pray through" - When we bring our requests before the Lord, and they are important, we must pray rightly until we get an answer from God. Sometimes this is also called "wrestling with God" (see Genesis 32:24-30). Jacob said, "I will not let You go until I receive the blessing!" Sometimes we need an answer from God, and we just don't understand why it is not coming. We may need to "wrestle with God" by reminding Him of His word and His promises pertaining to our need. It's not that God is forgetful, of course not! But there are some times when we need to show Him how very much we need this particular thing, how important it is to us, and also to His kingdom (remind Him of how our answered prayer will bring honor and glory to the King and the kingdom of God). Isaiah 43:26, "Put Me in remembrance; let us plead together." Isaiah 41:21, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons." Also, do you remember how Moses prayed to the Lord when God wanted to wipe out

all the Israelites because of their disobedience and unbelief? Moses argued that the heathen nations around them, who had heard how God brought them out of Egypt, would say, "Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them." (Numbers 14:11-21) He argued or "wrestled" with the Lord, reminding God that to destroy the Israelites would bring sarcastic comments from the heathen nations. Then in Numbers 11:20-21, God says "I have pardoned them according to your word." (That's Moses' word!), and states "....All the earth shall be filled with the GLORY of the Lord."

5.) We must confess all sin to God. Although all of the above are important in bringing our petitions before a righteous God, none is more important than our pureness from sin. We must make sure we are completely clean from sin in mind or body (see I John 1:6-9). Our right position before the Lord is of utmost importance, and we must be aware that our position and our authority and power in prayer before a just God are made possible by the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin.

6.) We must rely on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our greatest Helper in prayer (see Romans 8:26-27). All of our power and strength comes from God the Holy Spirit, and is to be used with authority, nothing wavering, as the Father has given us the right to use His word as a sword. As a soldier of the King, we must be cleansed inside and out, and then with all boldness and authority we put on the armor of God, which is putting on Christ (Ephesians 6:10-18, and Romans 13:14). The armor is made to fit us exactly, and we are the ones who must put it on, but I do pray and ask God to help me put it on. I ask Him to check my backside, and check for any openings I'm not aware of (I call them "glitches" in the armor). What might cause these "glitches" in our armor? Again, it is unconfessed sin, which grieves the Holy Spirit, who is our source of power. Sins of commission and omission, when we transgress the will of God, lead to a loss of strength, power and the ability to do the task that God has commissioned and prepared us to do. If not put in check, we will start slipping into danger and extreme weakness. We must remember to "...Lean not on our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct our paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

7.) We must pray with praise and thanksgiving. One thing we all like is praise. Why should we feel so far removed from our God to think He does not like and deserve our praise? I don't believe there is a better way to share our feelings and demonstrate our love to our Father than by our obedience and thankfulness. I Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Beloved, try if you will to imagine you have two children, and every time they acknowledge you exist they want something from you, with an unthankful, "gimme, gimme" attitude, would that not be a bad scenario? Wouldn't it be great if, when they thought you were not around, you heard them saying what a great Mom or Dad they have, and how much they love you, and just how thankful they are to have you as a father or mother? We must not lose sight of the fact that if we have accepted Jesus as Savior, we have been adopted into the family of God (John 1:12). Yes, our Heavenly Father is Elohim and Jehovah, the former indicating His power and preeminence, and the latter His un-originated, immutable (unchanging), eternal and self-sustaining existence. He has chosen us, the church, to be the bride of His only begotten Son - yes, to be the Bride of Christ. I believe He is worthy to be praised at all times!

Thanksgiving is an often overlooked word in the Bible, but Paul gives a clear illustration how prayer and thanksgiving go together in Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

8.) We must give in order to receive. Stinginess is a major hindrance to prayer. The one who gives generously to the poor and to God's work is the one who receives generously from God. The generous Christian is the "mighty man" of prayer (Luke 6:38, II Corinthians 9:5-14), and the stingy man is powerless and weak in prayer. Remember, when we say "giving" we do not just mean money. In the Body of Christ, your generous and cheerful giving of your time and talents, and use of your God-given spiritual gifts is needed. Everything you have has been given to you by God, anyway (I Corinthians 4:7, "What do you have that you did not receive?"). When we reinvest with God, the dividends are powerful and fulfilling. My beloved in Christ, remember

the glorious promise spoken by Paul to the Philippian church, "But my God shall supply ALL your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

9.) Keep a prayer journal. This is not a requirement, but is truly a blessing for those who will keep one. Write down your prayer request, and the date you began to pray for that thing, or that person. Write one or more promises from God's word that apply to that prayer request (these would be the promises on which you will stand for believing you are praying in the will of God). Then, when your prayer is answered, **write down HOW God answered it, and the date.** Months or years later, you can go back and look at your prayer journal and see how God was faithful in answering your prayers. This helps especially if you get down, or depressed, or just have a prayer that is taking a long time to see the answer. Looking back over all the times God has "come through for you" will help strengthen your faith. Habakkuk 2:2-3 "Then the Lord answered me and said, '**Write the vision and make it plain on tablets**, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is **yet for an appointed time**; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Hindrances to Prayer

1.) Selfish prayers - James 4:3, "You ask, and do not receive, because you ask amiss (with wrong motives), that you may consume it upon your own desires." If we ask any petition merely to receive something to use for our pleasure or self gratification we are "asking amiss," and should not expect to receive what we ask from God. This explains why many prayers remain unanswered. The true purpose of prayer is that God may be glorified in the answer (John 14:13)

2.) Sin is a hindrance to our prayers. Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear dull that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your SINS have hidden His face from you, that He will not hear." The psalmist's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and **see if there is any wicked way in me**" (Psalm 139:23-24). Wait before God until He puts His finger upon the thing that is displeasing in His sight. Then, this sin should be confessed and put away. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).

3.) Putting other things before God in your life - Allowing other things to become "idols" in your life, replacing God in your heart, causes God to refuse to listen to your prayers. "Son of man, these men have **set up their idols in their heart**, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face. Should I be inquired of at all by them?" (Ezekiel 14:3)

4.) Hardening your heart to the needs of the poor - Proverbs 21:13, "Whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

Our Part

Our part, as King David said in Psalm 37:3, is to "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness." God is faithful to provide for every one of your needs - all of them, according to His will. Philippians 4:19 says "But my God shall supply ALL your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." and Psalm 23:1 says "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want (in need)." Beloved brothers and sisters, are ALL your needs being met? If not, **you may need to examine your life** to see if you are doing any of the things which hinder answers to prayer. You must first "**examine yourself** as to whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are reprobates (not saved)? But I trust that you will know that we are not reprobates." (II Corinthians 13:5-6)

Praying on Behalf of Others

Dear friends, we who are in Christ Jesus have a never-ending duty to pray for others! God tells us in I Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." **God wants us to not only pray for ourselves and our own needs**, but to intercede on behalf of others. The word "intercede" means **to plead or beg God on behalf of another**. If we put this into practice more, we will be blessed more! God richly blesses those who will humble themselves and cry out on behalf of others in intercessory prayer. Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and

His righteousness, and ALL these things shall be added unto you." Don't you think that praying for others instead of always praying for yourself would be one way to "seek first God's kingdom?" Especially when you have a real need for yourself, and instead you spend time praying for others' needs, or lift up a brother or sister in prayer, or pray for souls to be won for God's kingdom, God is blessed by this selfless act. I Samuel 12:23, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way." This is our commitment to God and to you all. To God be the glory!

Dear friends, it is here I would like to share with you some great men of prayer who were mighty in ministry blessed by our Father. R.A. Torrey, John "Praying" Hyde, Andrew Murray, and last but surely not least, Charles H. Spurgeon. Spurgeon was called the "Prince of Preachers" and he was the most published preacher in history. Here are just two of his statements, of which there are thousands: he asks us to remember that "when we go to prayer, **we are accessing the mind of God**" and when he was asked why he was so phenomenally successful, he would frequently reply, "**My people pray for me.**" This was a man of God and a man of prayer - so popular that, in England, they built the Metropolitan Tabernacle just for him to preach in on Sundays, and it would fill to capacity (6,000 seats) three times each Sunday. His own parishioners were asked to give up one Sunday a month so there would be room for strangers that had traveled long distances just to hear him preach. On Monday and other nights of the week, hundreds and even thousands would show up for prayer meetings! His favorite subject to preach on (his "passion") was the glorious grace of God. One of his favorite verses was "My grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." II Corinthians 12:9

Dearest brothers and sisters, it is Dottie's and my prayer and trust that you have developed a stronger and deeper commitment to your prayer life in Step 11, and that you will continue to exercise in prayer that your spiritual strength would continue to grow. This is truly pleasing to our Lord. May God richly bless you.

In His love and service,
Pastor

Tom

Questions About Prayer

1. Can I pray to a saint?

ANSWER: No, it is forbidden by God to pray to ANYONE but Him. "**Saints**" **CANNOT enter in or help in our lives**, anyway, because God's word says a person who has died cannot cross over back into the land of the living. **Luke 16:26**, "And besides all this, between us and you **there is a great gulf fixed**, so that **those who want to PASS from HERE to YOU cannot**, nor can those from there pass to us." We are forbidden by God from trying to contact the dead IN ANY WAY. Praying to people who have died, no matter HOW great a Christian they were in life, is the same to God as if you went to a séance, and praying to statues or pictures of "saints" is the sin of idolatry (Exodus 20:4-5). King Saul in the Old Testament tried to contact Samuel after Samuel had died (Samuel was a priest of God's temple, and a great man of God). Saul went to a woman who communicated with familiar spirits, she held a séance, and one of the spirits (demons) impersonated Samuel. God later tells us that it was for this reason that Saul died - because he ASKED COUNSEL from someone who consulted with spirits. If you pray to ANYONE other than God Himself, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, you will open yourself up to be deceived by demons (I Corinthians 10:19-21).

•**Deuteronomy 18:9-12** "When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you SHALL NOT LEARN TO IMITATE the **detestable** things of those nations. There SHALL NOT be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire (human sacrifice), or one who uses divination (FORTUNE TELLING), or one who practices WITCHCRAFT, or one who interprets omens (PSYCHICS), or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or one who CONSULTS with FAMILIAR SPIRITS, or a spiritist, or **ONE WHO CALLS UP**

THE DEAD (séances). For whoever **does these things** is **DETESTABLE to the Lord**.....but as for you, the Lord your God HAS NOT ALLOWED YOU TO DO SO."

•**I Chronicles 10:13** "So Saul DIED for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word (commandment) of the Lord, which he did not keep; and also for ASKING COUNSEL of a familiar spirit, to inquire of it."

Jesus teaches us **HOW to PRAY**, and that is **to ASK the FATHER in the NAME OF JESUS**. God the Father answers our prayers and meets our needs IN Christ Jesus and BY Christ Jesus. This is the correct way to make formal petitions, but **we may TALK to Jesus** or the Holy Spirit at any time. We do not need to go through saints or Mary to reach God the Father or Jesus, and in fact, God says there is NO OTHER mediator or "mediatrix" other than Jesus Himself - He is our way to the Father (see John 14:1-6).

•**John 14:6** Jesus said, "I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE; NO ONE can come to the Father, except through ME."

•**Matthew 6:9-13** "In THIS MANNER, therefore, PRAY: **OUR FATHER** in heaven....."

•**John 16:23-24, 26-27** "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you **ASK THE FATHER in MY NAME** He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing IN MY NAME. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (26-27) "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do NOT say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; **for the Father Himself loves you**, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

•**Philippians 4:6-7** "Be ANXIOUS for nothing, but in everything **by prayer and supplication** WITH THANKSGIVING, let your **REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD**. And the PEACE OF GOD, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds **in Christ Jesus**."

•**Philippians 4:19** "But **my GOD** SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS according to His riches in glory by **Christ Jesus**."

•**I Timothy 2:5** "For there is ONE GOD, and **one Mediator** between God and men, the Man CHRIST JESUS."

Finally, God does not use so-called "saints" or our relatives or friends who have gone on to heaven to assist us in our lives. He Himself helps us, and He uses His ANGELS. People who die do NOT BECOME ANGELS! Angels are created beings totally separate from the human creation. Be careful not to get involved in talking or praying to angels or spirits, because that is the same as "consulting with familiar spirits" in the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). **GOD USES HIS ANGELS TO SERVE and PROTECT BELIEVERS IN CHRIST:**

•**Hebrews 1:14** "Are they not all ministering SPIRITS, sent forth to render service on behalf of those who will inherit salvation?"

•**Psalm 91:11-12** "For He will give His ANGELS charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

•**Isaiah 63:8-9** "So He became their Savior. In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the ANGEL of His presence saved them."

•**Genesis 24:7 & 40** "The Lord God of heaven.....He **shall send His ANGEL before you...**"The Lord, before whom I have walked, **will send His ANGEL with you** to make your journey successful...."

•**Acts 12:7-11** "...an ANGEL of the Lord suddenly appeared , and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and roused him, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And his chains fell off his hands.....And when Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His ANGEL and rescued me from the hand of Herod.'"

•**Acts 5:18-20** "...but an ANGEL of the Lord during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, 'Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.'"