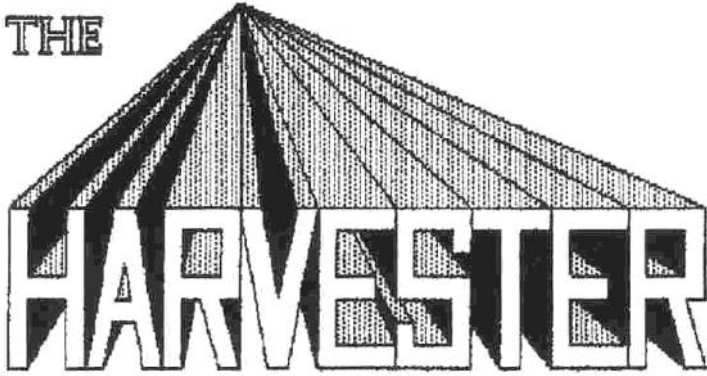




"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

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PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges God has given His people, yet it is often one of the most neglected parts of the Christian life. Through prayer we have direct access to the Creator of the universe. We can cast our burdens upon Him, seek His wisdom, confess our sins, intercede for others, and enjoy fellowship with our heavenly Father.

The disciples recognized there was something unique about the prayer life of Jesus. They did not ask Him, "Lord, teach us to preach," or "Lord, teach us to perform miracles." Instead,

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they said, "*Lord, teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1). They understood that prayer was the source of His strength, His wisdom, and His communion with the Father.

Jesus also gave His disciples what we commonly call the Lord's Prayer (Mat. 6; Luke 11). It was never intended to be a magical formula to repeat mindlessly. Jesus introduced it by saying, "*After this manner therefore pray ye*" (Mat. 6:9), showing that it is a model for prayer. It teaches us to begin by honoring God's name, seeking His kingdom and His will, before presenting our own needs. It reminds us to depend on God daily for provision, seek His forgiveness, forgive others, and ask for strength against temptation. It provides the framework for a balanced prayer life that is centered on God rather than ourselves.

Throughout Scripture we also find several important principles that teach us how to pray effectively.

Pray with Humility

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus contrasted two very different prayers. The Pharisee proudly recounted his religious accomplishments and thanked God that he was better than other people. The publican, however, stood at a distance, would not even lift his eyes toward heaven, and simply prayed, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" (Luke 18:13)

Jesus declared that the publican, not the Pharisee, went home justified before God.

This passage teaches us that God hears the humble heart, not the proud performance. Prayer is never about displaying our spirituality or impressing those around us. We come before

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God entirely on the basis of His grace and mercy, not because of our own goodness. Pride closes the heart to God, while humility opens the door to His blessing.

Pray in Submission

Luke 22 records one of the most moving prayers in Scripture. In the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing the suffering that lay before Him, Jesus prayed, *"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"* (Luke 22:42).

Jesus honestly expressed His deepest desire, yet willingly submitted Himself to the Father's perfect will.

One of the greatest lessons about prayer is that its highest purpose is not simply to change our circumstances but to align our hearts with God's purposes. Sometimes God removes the trial; sometimes He gives us strength to endure it. As Christ demonstrated, prayer may not always change the cup we must drink, but it always strengthens the one who drinks it.

Pray with the Help of the Holy Spirit

Many believers become discouraged because they feel they do not know how to pray. Romans 8:26 provides tremendous encouragement: *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."*

God never expected us to pray in our own strength alone. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us according to God's will. Our prayers do not depend upon eloquence or impressive language. Even when words fail us, the Spirit of God understands the deepest burdens of our hearts.

This reminds us that effective prayer depends more upon God's grace than upon our ability.

Replace Worry with Prayer

Philippians 4:6 gives one of the clearest commands concerning prayer: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made"*

known unto God."

Every worry is an invitation to pray.

This does not mean we ignore our responsibilities. We should faithfully do everything within our ability while trusting God with everything beyond our control. Instead of allowing anxiety to consume our thoughts, we are called to bring every concern before God with thankful hearts, confident that He cares for us.

Prayer exchanges panic for peace because it places our burdens into the hands of One who is able to carry them.

Pray with Childlike Faith

When parents brought their children to Jesus, the disciples tried to send them away. Jesus responded, "*Suffer little children...to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Mat. 19:14).

Children come with simple trust. They are honest, dependent, and confident that those who love them will care for them.

Prayer should have the same spirit. God is not impressed by polished speeches or religious vocabulary. He welcomes those who come with sincere hearts that trust Him completely. We never need to impress our heavenly Father; we simply need to come to Him.

Pray in Times of Distress

Acts 16:24-25 records Paul and Silas praying and singing praises while chained in a Philippian prison at midnight.

Their circumstances were terrible, yet their faith remained steadfast.

Prayer is not reserved for life's pleasant moments. It often becomes most meaningful during our darkest hours. Trials do not close heaven's door. In fact, difficult seasons often draw us into deeper fellowship with God than times of comfort ever could.

The testimony of Paul and Silas also reminds us that others are watching how believers respond to suffering. Their prayers and praises became a witness to everyone in that prison.

Pray Together

Prayer is personal, but it is not intended to be private all the time. In Romans 15:30 Paul urged believers to "*strive together with me in your prayers.*"

There is tremendous strength when God's people unite in prayer.

Corporate prayer builds fellowship, strengthens churches, encourages missionaries and leaders, and reminds us that we bear one another's burdens. Shared prayer often produces shared victories.

Let Your Burden Become Prayer

Paul wrote in Romans 10:1, "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*"

Notice that Paul's burden became his prayer.

Many people become deeply concerned about spiritual needs, family members, or world events, yet never consistently pray about them. Genuine burdens should always drive us to our knees. Prayer reveals what truly matters to our hearts.

If something is important enough to worry about, it is important enough to pray about.

Pray Continually

Finally, Scripture teaches that prayer is not to be an occasional event but a continual lifestyle.

Romans 12:12 tells believers to be "*continuing instant in prayer,*" while 1 Thessalonians 5:17 simply commands, "*Pray without ceasing.*"

This does not mean we spend every waking moment with bowed heads and closed eyes. Rather, it describes a life lived in continual fellowship with God. Throughout the day we de-

velop the habit of speaking with Him, seeking His wisdom, thanking Him for His blessings, and depending upon Him in every circumstance.

The praying Christian is defined not merely by moments of intensity but by a lifetime of consistency.

Conclusion

Prayer is far more than a religious duty; it is the privilege of every child of God. Through Christ we have continual access to our heavenly Father, who delights to hear the prayers of His people.

The Bible teaches us to pray humbly like the publican, submissively like Christ in Gethsemane, dependently through the help of the Holy Spirit, trustingly instead of worrying, simply like a child, faithfully during times of distress, together with other believers, and continually throughout our lives.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is not unanswered prayer but un-offered prayer. James reminds us, "*Ye have not, because ye ask not*" (James 4:2). How many blessings are missed, how many burdens are carried alone, and how many opportunities are lost because we fail to pray?

May we determine not simply to learn about prayer but to become people of prayer. Let us establish a regular time to pray, guard a quiet place to meet with God, and cultivate a heart that continually seeks His presence. The strength of our Christian life will never rise above the strength of our prayer life.

May it be said of us, as it was said of Saul after his conversion, "*Behold, he prayeth*" (Acts 9:11).

Pray humbly. Pray believingly. Pray earnestly. Pray persistently. Pray without ceasing. For when God's people pray, God works.

CALEB WHIDDON

Roanoke, AL

COMPONENTS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Mat. 6:9-13)

*Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name (v. 9b)*

P_{raise}

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive
our debtors. (v. 12)*

R_{epent}

Give us this day our daily bread. (v. 11)

*And lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil: (v. 13a)*

A_{sk}

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in
earth, as it is in heaven. (v. 10)*

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever. Amen. (v. 13b)*

Y_{ield}

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (Eph. 1:16-19)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Where did Stephen see Jesus standing?
2. Which disciple did not believe Jesus was alive?
3. Where did they sacrifice the thousands of oxen and sheep on the day of the dedication of Solomon's temple?
4. Who was Solomon's mother?
5. What food was Samson not allowed to eat?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. How is a man tempted according to James? DRAWN AWAY BY HIS OWN LUST, AND ENTICED (Jam. 1:14)
2. Who was the first of the apostles to perform a miracle after Jesus' resurrection? PETER (Acts 3:6)
3. I was the queen of Persia and refused to submit to my husband King Ahasuerus' request. Who am I? VASHTI (Est. 1:10-12)
4. What did Noah build the ark out of? GOPHER WOOD (Gen. 6:14,22)
5. Which one of Paul's companions was half Jewish? TIMOTHY (Acts 16:1-3)

