

USE THE PROPER WEAPONRY – PART 2

“PRAYER”

Christianity today is lifeless. Much of what is seen in lives of Christians is anything but powerful and supernatural. Christians are losing the battle against sin and temptation because they lack vitality and energy. They are dry spiritually and feel a sense of emptiness and shallowness. The church as a whole is weak and it is attributed largely to two things: lack of Biblical teaching, and a lack of prayer. The day in which we live is one of prayerlessness.

One of the biggest problems is that people simply do not pray. Many Christians go long periods of time without praying, and their lives show forth the results. It is hard to find a Christian who diligently, consistently, faithfully, perseveringly, and fervently, prays. If you find one, you will see the man whose spiritual life is in order! The person who does not pray will demonstrate that he is virtually powerless in his Christian life.

Another large problem that drains the vitality of many Christians is not that they do not pray, but they pray with the wrong motives and for the wrong things. Mystical books on prayers that resemble formulas and mantras are on the best seller lists. As a result, prayers offered up to God with carnal and self-seeking motives, and return with a NO answer (Jas. 4:1-4).

Many do not pray because they are stifled by the sin they nurture. Coming before God means that they come before His holiness, to which their sin is opposed. If they will come before God they must repent or be unable to endure His presence. Some opt to dim the blaze of His holiness by backing far away from Him.

There are those who do not know how to pray because they are ignorant of the Scriptures and what they teach regarding prayer. The Bible is filled with examples and instructions on prayer, but because they do not know the Bible it does not fuel their prayers and they too remain lifeless and can even become disheartened with prayer altogether.

There are those who claim to know theology from the Bible, but because of theological pride are not willing to pray since they say, “God already knows what will happen, so why pray? I cannot stop the eternal plan from moving forward...” Such do not know the Bible or theology at all as they suppose, for those who were most theologically sound were men and women of the deepest sort of praying.

Then there are those who pray well before others, much like the Pharisees who make a great show in public with eloquence and passion, but leave their own prayer closets vacant. They pray more and better before men than they do alone before God.

Next there are those who pray dutifully, never missing a single day in their routine, but have no true heart for God, acting out of tradition learned by rote. These have prayers that are so cold they freeze before they reach heaven and fall to the ground only to break in pieces.

Some pray with the classic “Christian-ese” - those catchy and witty little phrases that they string together to sound spiritual, but have no substance. These have the appearance of religiosity, but are the epitome of verbosity and pagan babbling.

Then there are those who pray to others in their prayers, in order to instruct or make a point, and miss praying to God. They pray, hoping that the person hearing the prayer would be convinced or moved as a result of this sly, backdoor remark.

Adding to that, some pray intermittently, here and there, when they think of it, but never on a consistent basis. They might offer short requests like Post-it notes throughout the day, but never seem to be willing to make the time to pour out the soul before God. These might offer token prayers at meals and bedtime, but fill their time with other priorities.

And there are some Christians who pray with little perseverance, starting strong for the first few moments, but quickly drift into daydreaming or sleep. These loiter in the presence of God with irreverence.

Finally, there are also those Christians who know what the Bible says about prayer, but do not pray. These are in the gravest sort of danger because they know what to do, but they harden their conscience against God by willfully disobeying. They are the most responsible because they are most accurately informed, and without excuse.

What about you? Do you pray? Do you pray as you should? The battle in the Christian life is won or lost in this matter of prayer. In this study on prayer we will define prayer, examine prayer from a Biblical perspective, urge you to evaluate your prayer life against that standard, and help you to implement the necessary changes in your life to the glory of God and the health of your soul.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

“Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart and soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to His Word, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God.”¹ - John Bunyan

*“True prayer is an approach of the soul [enabled] by the Spirit of God to the Throne of God. It is not the utterance of words, nor is it alone the feelings of desires, but it is the advance of the desires to God, **the spiritual approach of our nature towards the Lord our God.** True prayer is not a mere mental exercise, nor a vocal performance, but it is far deeper than that – **it is spiritual communion with the Creator of heaven and earth.** God is a Spirit unseen of mortal eye and only to be perceived by the inner man...Prayer is a spiritual business from beginning to end, and its aim and object end not with man, but reach to God Himself.”² - Charles H. Spurgeon*

“A true wish sent Godward”³ – Phillip Brooks

¹ John Bunyan, *Prayer* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 13.

² Charles H. Spurgeon quoted in Warren Wiersbe, *Classic Sermons on Prayer* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 27.

³ Quoted by Dr. James Rosscup, *BI504: Biblical Exposition of Prayer* (Sun Valley: Master's Seminary, 1998), 6.

*“Prayer is a means that God uses to give us what He wants.”*⁴ - W. Bingham Hunter

“Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of omnipotence.” - Charles H. Spurgeon

“Prayer is the soul’s traffic with heaven.” - Thomas Watson

Generally speaking, ***prayer is talking to God***. It is approaching God with the inner man on a spiritual plane. Specifically, prayer has many aspects and attitudes that govern it. The Bible is filled with explicit descriptions, models, heart attitudes, and illustrations that should direct our praying. In order for you to pray Biblically, you must understand the following 10 truths about prayer. Woven together they produce a solid and specific definition of prayer. Furthermore, they are the criteria by which your praying should be measured.

Prayer is:

1. Obeying the command of God

➤ **Isaiah 55:6**

➤ **Phil. 4:6**

Praying is a command of Scripture. To not pray is a sin against the Scripture and your conscience. If you don’t pray, what are you saying?

2. Longing for fellowship with God

➤ **Psalms 42:1-4**

➤ **Isaiah 59:2**

➤ **Psalms 27:4**

➤ **John 15:7**

Through prayer, we access the throne of God and join into sweet communion with Him. Your relationship with Him is seen most visibly to your soul when it is poured out before Him. If you don’t pray, what are you saying?

⁴ W. Bingham Hunter, *The God who Hears* (Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 12.

3. Responding to life's issues before God

➤ **1 Sam. 1:15**

➤ **Psalms 62:8**

➤ **Isaiah 26:16**

➤ **James 5:13**

When you face issues in your Christian life, you filter them through your worldview – how you interpret things you see. God calls us to look at life through His lenses in prayer. If you don't pray, what are you saying?

4. Recognizing your dependence upon God

➤ **Psalms 10:17**

➤ **Psalms 61:1**

➤ **Psalms 86:7**

➤ **John 15:5**

One of the chief ways that we acknowledge that we are needy and helpless apart from Christ is through our pleas to God in prayer. It is in that state that we declare our insufficiency for all things. If you don't pray, what are you saying?

5. Aligning your will in submission to God

➤ **Matt. 6:10**

➤ **Luke 22:42**

➤ **John 14:14**

➤ **1 John 5:14**

“Many pray, ‘Let this cup pass away,’ but few, ‘Thy will be done.’ ”
- Thomas Watson (*Body of Divinity*, p. 17)

Through praying, you do not clamor for your own way, but willingly come under and accept God’s will for your life. It is the attitude of submitting and surrendering yourself to Him and His plan. If you don’t pray, what are you saying?

6. Pleading for a part in God’s passion for His glory

➤ **Psalms 50:15**

➤ **John 14:13**

Praying is not the end, but the means to an end – the glory of God. When we pray, mindful that God sovereignly works all things for His glory, we realize that He not only ordains the end result, but also the means to that end – our prayers. It is in that sense that our prayers are daily used in the unfolding of this great spread of glory. If you don’t pray, what are you saying?

7. Savoring the Joy that comes from Christ

➤ **John 16:24**

16:24 joy may be full. In this case, the believer’s joy will be related to answered prayer and a full supply of heavenly blessing for everything consistent with the purpose of the Lord in one’s life.⁵

8. Drawing upon the resources made available through Christ

➤ **Hebrews 4:16**

⁵MacArthur, J. 1997, c1997. The MacArthur Study Bible (Electronic ed.) (Jn 16:24). Word Pub.: Nashville, TN.

➤ **Ephesians 2:18**

The most helpful and sufficient resources that we need to live the Christian life are those made available to us by Christ's atonement. They come in time of need and never fail. If you don't pray, what are you saying?

9. Offering your heart and life to God in praise

➤ **Psalms 66:17**

➤ **Psalms 73:18**

In glad adoration, praise, and gratitude we respond to who God is, what He has done, and what He will do when we pray, it is our constant affirmation of life devotion to God when we pray. If you don't pray, what are you saying?

10. Clinging to precious promises in the Word of God

➤ **Genesis 32:9-12**

➤ **1 Kings 8:26**

➤ **Psalms 119:49**

The Word of God contains precious truths that direct our prayers. When we seek God, it is with the knowledge that He has promised certain things to those who pray, and in faith we ask accordingly. If you don't pray, what are you saying?

TRUTH IN THE LIFE

The question to your heart is: "Does this describe your prayer life?" Are you characterized as a man or woman whose prayers have this driving motivation and attributes? This is the essence of Biblical praying. Over the course of the next several weeks, take time to inventory your own prayer life, daily measuring yourself against the standard set forth in the Scriptures. In your next quiet time, sit down and ask the Lord to convict you of the areas in your prayer life that need work, and begin to map out a plan of change.