

Pray First-Part 4-The Prayer Life of a Christian

Sunday, January 21, 2024 *(Live Stream Only)*

For many believers, prayer remains an untapped resource. Without constant communion with our Father in heaven, we continually fall short in so many areas of this life. The Father's plan is for you to succeed in life, but by His standard, not ours. Everything about redemption shows us how much the God of all creation wants a close intimate relationship with every child of God.

Introduction

F.B. Meyer, in his book book, *The Secret of Guidance* said,

"The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but un-offered prayer." - F.B. Meyer

Instead of prayer (communion with God) being something we do every day, like breathing, eating and walking and talking, it's thought of more as a 911 service.

ILLUSTRATION: Pilot in trouble

"Pilot to tower, I'm 300 miles from the airport, six hundred feet above the ground, and I'm out of fuel. I am descending rapidly. Please advise. Over." "Tower to pilot," the dispatcher began, "Repeat after me: "Our Father Who art in heaven..."

Prayer for many is like the fire alarm on the wall. "Pull in case of emergency." It is talked about as much as anything else yet practiced less than anything else. And for the believer it remains one of the greatest gifts our Lord has given us outside of salvation.

Paul was somebody who understood prayer and its power. Prayer was a part of Paul's life, and he took it for granted that it would be a part of the life of every Christian. You cannot really be a good

Christian and not pray, just like you cannot have a good marriage if you don't talk to your wife. You can be a Christian and not pray, just like you can be married and not talk to your wife. But in both circumstances, you will be miserable. Prayer is the pipeline of communication between God and His people, between God and those who love Him.

1. Pray with persistence

Colossians 4:2 (NKJV) — **Continue** earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

Colossians 4:2 (NLT) — **Devote** yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

Colossians 4:2 (AMP) — Be **earnest and unwearied** and **steadfast in your prayer [life]**, being [both] **alert and intent** in [your praying] with thanksgiving.

The word translated, "**continue steadfastly**," is one word in the original language. **It can be translated, "persist in, adhere firmly to, or remain devoted to or to give unremitting care to."** It carries with it the idea of dedication.

Two of the most instructive parables Jesus ever told on prayer, one in Luke 18 and the other in Luke 11, both have to do with being persistent and not giving up in prayer.

Luke 18:1 (AMP) — ALSO [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to turn coward (faint, lose heart, and give up).

Luke 11:9 (AMP) So I say to you, **Ask and keep on asking** and it shall be given you; **seek and keep on seeking** and you shall

find; **knock and keep on knocking** and the door shall be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 (AMP) For **everyone** who asks and keeps on asking **receives**; and he who seeks and keeps on seeking **finds**; and to him who knocks and keeps on knocking, **the door shall be opened**.

Each of those verbs are in the present tense, active voice and could be translated, "keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking." Jesus does not want us to give up in prayer, He instructs us to be persistent.

Now there is a difference between a persistent prayer and a long prayer. A person who is persistent in prayer does not necessarily have to pray for a long time.

Persistence means not giving up.

Some people give up easily, they quit because they say they don't feel like praying, the joy is gone, the feeling is gone. But we are not to live by our feelings but to live by the commandments of our Lord who tells us to pray without ceasing.

ILLUSTRATION:

George Muller, known as a prayer warrior, had this to say about persistence in prayer,"

George Müller (born **Johann Georg Ferdinand Müller**, 27 September 1805 – 10 March 1898) was a Christian evangelist and the director of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England. He was one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren movement. Later during the split, his group was called the Open Brethren.

He cared for 10,024 orphans during his lifetime, and provided educational opportunities for the orphans to the point that he was even accused by some of raising the poor above their natural station in British life. He established 117 schools which offered Christian education to more than 120,000.

Not receiving government support and only accepting unsolicited gifts, this organization received and disbursed 143 million dollars in today's terms^[7] – by the time of Müller's death, primarily using the money for supporting the orphanages and distributing about 285,407 Bibles,^[1] 1,459,506 New Testaments,^[1] and 244,351 other religious texts,^[1] which were translated into twenty other languages.^[8] The money was also used to support other "[faith missionaries](#)" around the world, such as [Hudson Taylor](#).^[9] The work continues to this day.

"It is a common temptation of Satan to make us give up the reading of the Word and prayer when our enjoyment is gone; as if it were of no use to read the scriptures when we do not enjoy them, and as if it were no use to pray when we have no spirit of prayer. The truth is that, in order to enjoy the Word, we ought to continue to read it, and the way to obtain a spirit of prayer is to continue praying. The less we read the Word of God, the less we desire to read it, and the less we pray, the less we desire to pray." -George Muller

ILLUSTRATION:

In one well-documented incident, the orphanage had no food for the children's breakfast, and there was no money to buy any. However, Müller gathered the children for prayer and thanked God for providing their breakfast. As they finished praying, a knock came at the door. It was the baker, who explained that he had been prompted to bake bread for them and deliver it that morning. Soon after, the milkman's cart broke down right in front of the orphanage, and he offered the children the milk so that it wouldn't spoil.

Be persistent in prayer.

2. Pray with passion.

2 Timothy 1:6 (AMP) That is why I would remind you to **stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning)** the [gracious] gift of God, [**the inner fire**] **that is in you** by means of the laying on of my hands [with those of the elders at your ordination].

If you are persistent in something, it stands to reason that you are to be passionate about it. In fact, Paul says we should be vigilant or be watchful; it is the opposite of slothfulness. This describes passionate prayer.

Jesus was passionate about His prayer life, it was something He was always doing.

S.D. Gordon in his book, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, says How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only his regular habit, but his resort in every emergency, however slight or serious. When perplexed he prayed. When hard pressed by work he prayed. When hungry for fellowship he found it in prayer. He chose his associates and received his messages upon his knees. If tempted, he prayed. If criticized, he prayed. If fatigued in body or wearied in spirit, he had recourse to his one unfailing habit of prayer. Prayer brought him unmeasured power at the beginning and kept the flow unbroken and undiminished. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation that would not yield to prayer.

And every time we see Jesus praying He was praying with passion.

Luke 3:21 (NKJV) — When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and **while He prayed**, the **heaven was opened**.

Passionate prayer opens Heaven.

Luke 6:12 (NKJV) Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and **continued all night in prayer** to God.

Luke 6:13 (NKJV) And when it was day, He called His **disciples** to Himself; and **from them He chose twelve** whom He also named apostles:

Passionate prayer gives direction.

Luke 9:29 (NKJV) — **As He prayed**, the **appearance of His face was altered**, and His robe became white and glistening.

Passionate prayer enables us to experience the glory of the Father

John 17:20 (TPT) “And I ask not only for these disciples, but also **for all those who will one day believe** in me through their message.

John 17:21 (TPT) I pray for them all to be **joined together** as one even **as you and I**, Father, are joined together as one. I pray for them to become one with us so that the world will recognize that you sent me.

John 17:22 (TPT) For the **very glory you have given to me I have given them** so that **they will be joined together as one and experience the same unity that we enjoy**.

Passionate prayer impacts the lives of others

**It is only through passionate prayer
that we can pour out our hearts to God**

Luke 23:33 (NKJV) And when they had come to the place called Calvary, **there they crucified Him**, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Luke 23:34 (NKJV) Then Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them**, for they do not know what they do."

**A life that is lived in passionate prayer will enable us to
maintain that spirit, even in the most difficult of
circumstances**

Passionate prayer is prayer from the heart not just from the head.

But just before the Lord's prayer what does He say?

Matthew 6:7 (NKJV) And when you pray, **do not use vain repetitions** as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

What has happened to the Lord's Prayer? People repeat it as if it were some kind of magic mantra that will bless them or move God to hear them. They are doing with it is exactly what He was instructing us not to do with it.

You don't tell someone whom you are close to. "I love you" because you want to ask them for something. Great relationships do not work well when manipulation is the motive.

James 5:16b (AMP) The **earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer** of a righteous man **makes tremendous power available** [dynamic in its working].

3. Pray with thankfulness

Ephesians 5:20 (NKJV) giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Thanksgiving is the natural result of being filled with and walking under the influence of the Holy Spirit

Philippians 4:6 (NKJV) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV) in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Colossians 3:17 (NKJV) And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Expressing gratitude does several things:

- It articulates dependence
- It demonstrates relationship
- It helps develop proper attitudes
- It generates humility

4. Pray, making intercession

Intercessory prayer is basically praying for others, it is praying for God's will to be done in the lives of other people.

Intercessory prayers characterized the prayer life of Jesus.

Isaiah 53:12 (NKJV) Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, **Because He poured out His soul unto death**, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And **He bore the sin of many**, And **made intercession for the transgressors**.

Luke 22:32 (NKJV) But **I have prayed for you**, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

Luke 23:34 (NKJV) Then Jesus said, “**Father, forgive them**, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.

John 14:16 (NKJV) And **I will pray the Father**, and **He will give you another Helper**, that He may **abide with you forever**—

Romans 8:34 (NKJV) Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also **makes intercession for us**.

Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV) Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**.

Intercessory prayer changes things.

ILLUSTRATION:

Howard Hendricks, who for years taught at the Dallas Theological Seminary and pastored in the area shared this story. He said: Years ago in a church in Dallas we were having trouble finding a teacher for a junior high boys class. The list of prospects had only one name -- and when they told me who it was I said, "You've got

to be kidding." But I couldn't have been more wrong about that young man. He took the class and revolutionized it.

I was so impressed I invited him to my home for lunch and asked him the secret of his success. He pulled out a little black book. On each page he had a small picture of one of the boys, and under the boy's name were comments like "having trouble in arithmetic," or "comes to church against parents' wishes," or "would like to be a missionary some day, but doesn't think he has what it takes."

"I pray over those pages every day," he said, "and I can hardly wait to come to church each Sunday to see what God has been doing in their lives."

You see, when you pray for others, when you pray for God's work to be done, for His will to be accomplished, He will begin to use you and grow you in ways that will astonish those around you.

Sometimes I think we do not become what God wants us to become, because we are too focused on ourselves and not on others. It is when we pray for others that we will become more like Jesus, and as we become more like Jesus God will grow us more, show us more, and use us more.

We must pray for others.

Five things that happen when we pray:

1. Persistent prayer allows an internal work of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26 (NKJV) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things**, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

It deepens our determination and our strengthens us in our partnership with God. As we pray we begin to become aware of things not known before.

John 16:13 (NKJV) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come**.

2. Prayer requires trust which involves steadfast patience. Often there is time between the asking and the receiving.

Sometimes we see instant results and other times it takes longer.

The earnest, heartfelt, continued prayer is one that refuses to be denied the answer

3. Prayer opens our spiritual eyes

2 Kings 6:15 (NKJV) And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, **surrounding the city with horses and chariots**. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

2 Kings 6:16 (NKJV) So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

2 Kings 6:17 (NKJV) And **Elisha prayed**, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then **the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**

Prayer opens our eyes, enabling us to see what God is doing, to see things we are blinded to without prayer. That's because prayer

is communication. We speak to God, God answers us, speaking to us, showing us.

4. Prayer aligns our heart with God's heart

Adjustment, alignment, setting our thoughts, emotions, actions.

Psalm 139:23 (NLT) Search me, O God, and **know** my heart; **test** me and **know** my anxious thoughts.

Psalm 139:24 (NLT) **Point out anything in me** that offends you, and **lead me** along the path of everlasting life.

Philippians 4:6 (NLT) Don't worry about anything; instead, **pray about everything**. **Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.**

Philippians 4:7 (NLT) Then **you will experience God's peace**, which exceeds anything we can understand. **His peace will guard** your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

5. Prayer enables us to move forward

John 15:5 (NKJV) "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for **without Me you can do nothing.**

John 15:7 (NKJV) If you **abide** in Me, and **My words abide** in you, **you will ask** what you desire, and **it shall be done** for you.

John 15:8 (NKJV) **By this** My Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit**; so you will be My disciples.

Isaiah 40:28 (NKJV) Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

Isaiah 40:29 (NKJV) He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.

Isaiah 40:30 (NKJV) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV) But **those who wait on the Lord** Shall **renew their strength**; They shall **mount up with wings** like eagles, They shall **run and not be weary**, They shall **walk and not faint**.

**Prayer engages God, enables God's people,
and enlarges His kingdom**

What does your prayer life look like this morning? Are you persistent in prayer? Are your prayers passionate or are they perfunctory? Are they filled with intensity and fervor or are they weak, timid and lacking faith? What about gratitude? How much time have you spent thanking God for all He has done for you? And who are you praying for? Is there anyone in your life that you are praying will get saved? Is there a burden on your heart to see God's kingdom expand, to see His will done?

We are robbing God of His desire to bless our lives in the manner He desires when we neglect the thing He wants the most, close, intimate time with Him.