

Prayer and the Christian Life

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Prayer is a wonderful provision that God has given for the new Christian life. Prayer is the “first step” that a person must take in order to grow in their relationship with God. Have you taken time to pray today? Are you developing your prayer life? The hymnwriter caught the essence and simplicity of prayer within the Christian life when he said:

“My God and I go in the field together,
We walk and talk as good friends should and do,
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter,
My God and I walk thru the meadows hue.”

That is the essence of what praying to God is all about. Prayer is not something mystical or magical. It is talking to God as you would talk to a friend and walking in a sweet communion with God by talking to Him on a daily basis. Prayer is the first ministry we are called to do. Prayer is the most important ministry we are called to. Prayer is the expression and exercise of dependence upon God. Prayer is communication with God. We are always welcome to the place of prayer. In fact, we have the right to be there (Hebrews 4:14-16).

I will give you an outline on prayer in order to help you bring together the basic Bible teachings on this subject.

A. The Definition of Prayer

To put it simply, prayer is when you talk to God. Prayer is contact with God (1 Kings 8:28; Psalms 61:1; Luke 6:12). If you do not pray you will not be in contact or fellowship with God. You need to understand this as a young Christian. Furthermore, you will not receive blessings from God unless you pray (Philippians 4:6). Prayer is what brings you into contact with God. Prayer is what brings you close to God and gives you a growing relationship with God. Prayer is what brings God’s blessings into your life. This means that your days and life must be saturated and surrounded with prayer. Prayer should be a consistent pattern and way of life for the Christian. To neglect prayer

is a failure in your Christian life and will keep you from being the kind of Christian that God wants you to be.

B. The Types of Prayer

Philippians 4:6 says:

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

In this verse the Bible talks about several different types of prayers, which in return explain what prayer really is. We will look at this verse and other verses to help us understand the different types of prayer.

1. There are prayers of worship (prayer is worship to God).

The word “prayer” itself (Phil. 4:6) means the act of worship to God. This word “prayer” is the general word that carries the idea of real heartfelt adoration, devotion, and worship to God. Whenever you find yourself worrying and in need, your first action ought to be to get alone with God and worship Him through prayer. Worship is what is needed. We will talk about worship in another study. For now, you must understand that worship is when you pray to God and praise Him for who He is, and how great He is, and what He has done for your life. You must learn to see the greatness and majesty of God! You must first realize that God is big enough to solve your problems and meet your needs and mend your broken heart. Too often we rush into His presence and hastily tell Him our needs, when we ought to approach His throne calmly and in deep reverence and worship. The first step in “right praying” is when you take time to simply worship God by ascribing to Him how wonderful He is to you and what He means to you and what great things He has done for you. To God be the glory great things He has done. Worship is the missing ingredient to many of our prayers. Worship is really the core or center of what true prayer really is and should be in your own life.

2. There are prayers of petition (prayer is petitioning God).

The word “supplication” in Philippians 4:6 speaks of petitioning God about your needs. This is done by bringing specific requests before God in order that He might answer the requests accordingly and as

He so pleases. As you have needs in life and face problems, the most common response should be for you to go to God and ask for His help and guidance in the situations that you face. You will find yourself petitioning God about specific matters, asking Him to meet your needs and grant His blessing and favor upon your life. This is a common type of prayer that helps you to understand what true prayer really is and how it functions. The greatest thing in your Christian life is that you can now go to God and ask Him for His help in the time of your need (see Hebrews 4:16).

3. There are prayers of praise (prayer is praising God).

These are prayers of thanksgiving addressed to God for all that He has done for you and how He has been working with your life (“with thanksgiving” – Phil. 4:6). You need to take time to be thankful when you pray and worship God (Acts 2:42,47; 16:25). This is an important part of all true prayer. An attitude of thanksgiving should always attend our prayer lives. Every time we praise God we are in a very real sense bringing a prayer of praise to Him (Psalms 92:1; 118:1,28-29; 119:62, 164). Thankless praying is not true praying.

4. There are prayers of intercession (prayer is interceding for others before God).

These types of prayers are mentioned in Ephesians 6:18 as the “supplication for all saints.” You need to intercede or pray for other believers so that they might have victory in their own lives and escape the devil’s tactics, tricks and temptations, which he sends their way. Prayer involves this very ministry to other believers. True prayer is exactly this. You should pray for other people and ask God to give them help and victory. Intercessory prayer for the needs of other people can be seen and (Numbers 21:6; 1 Samuel 12:23; Acts 12:5; 1Thess. 5:25; Col. 1:9). We also find Jesus Himself praying for Simon Peter (Luke 22:31-32). If Jesus prayed for others, we should pray for others as well.

5. There are prayers of confession (prayer is when we confess our sins before God).

You need to daily confess sins that invade your life and keep your life pure and clean before God (1 John 1:9). Prayer involves dealing with your sin as soon as it invades your heart and life. There needs to be an active confession going on in your life. When sin invades your heart, do not wait to confess it. Confess it immediately and restore your relationship with God. Confession of your sin through prayer is needed in order to maintain your fellowship with God (1 John 1:7-9) and the joy of God within your life (Psalms 51:1-4,12).

These are the five main categories explaining what prayer really is. They are the five key ways that we pray and communicate with God. You must remember to practice these different types of prayer (worship, petition, thanksgiving or praise, intercession and confession) or else your prayer life will become lopsided. All petitions without praise will make your prayer life meaningless and dull. You must mix all the different types of prayer and then you will have a balanced prayer life. Balance is what you should be looking for.

In addition to these five types of prayer, there are also other various kinds of prayer that branch out from these main categories. I will continue to list them in an orderly fashion and seek to explain what prayer really is.

You must learn to understand what prayer really is. In learning this, you will develop a real understanding of what to pray for and what to pray about when you come to the Lord in prayer. In Psalms 119, you will discover many little tidbits about what prayer really is. You will discover some of the things that you can pray about and learn just how to pray in your new Christian life. The Psalms are an inspired prayer and praise book for you today that will teach you how to pray.

6. There are prayers for reliance (prayer is when you ask God for strength and help).

You need to pray to God in order to receive His help and strength for your daily living. You need to rely upon God for victory and assistance in your life. Prayer is the way that you can receive God's help and victory for your life (Psalms 119:28,107, 116; 120:1; 121:1-2; 2 Chronicles 14:11).

7. There are prayers for obedience and purity (prayer is asking God to help keep your life pure and holy in your manner of living and conduct - Psalms 119:9, 29, 35, 163; 2 Thess. 3:3-6).
8. There are prayers for separation (prayer is telling God that you desire to stay free from worldly compromise with people and all error – Psalms 119:63, 110, 115, 128, 101, 30).
9. There are prayers for discernment (prayer is asking God to give you discernment about holy and unholy living and concerning the everyday decisions you make in life - Psalms 119:66).

We need to pray that God will help us to make careful distinctions or contrasts in our thinking about truth and error, right and wrong and good and evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 2:15).

10. There are prayers for direction (prayer is when you pray for God to direct your life and show you His will).

The Psalmist prayed that God would direct his steps as he yields to the Word of God (119:133). Paul also prayed the believers would follow the will of God for their own lives and live a life that is pleasing to the Lord (Colossians 1:9-10). You need to ask God to direct your life throughout the day so that you do His will.

11. There are prayers for peace (prayer is when you ask for God's peace and center your attention upon it - 119:165; 1 Cor. 1:3).
12. There are prayers for joy (prayer is when you ask for God's joy to be restored in your life - Ps. 51:12).
13. There are prayers for comfort (prayer is when you ask God to comfort your troubled hearts – Ps. 119:76; 2 Cor. 1:3-4).
14. There are prayers for the understanding of God's Word (prayer is when you ask God to enlighten your mind concerning the truth of Scripture – Ps. 119:18,33,130,125).
15. There are prayers acknowledging God's sovereignty over your life (prayer is when you acknowledge that God is in control of the events of your life – Ps. 119:75).

16. There are prayers of decision (prayer is when you make correct decisions and pray to God about them – Ps. 119:59).

17. There are prayers for healing (prayer is when you ask God to heal and restore your body) – Ps. 119: 103:1-3; James 5:13.

Of course, this is a specific type of petition to God that will become very common in your time of praying. You should ask God to heal and restore your body to physical health and trust in God to help you through the difficult times of life (Psalms 119:153; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9). God may heal you concerning the matter that you prayed to Him about (2 Kings 20:1-11). However, God does not always grant your healing, but He will hear your prayers and always bring to pass what is best for your life. He will also promise to grant you with strength as you go through the difficult times of your life (2 Cor.12:9).

18. There are prayers for the salvation of people (prayer is when you ask God to save the souls of lost people – Ps. 119:46; Romans 10:1; Luke 10:2).

19. There are prayers for restoration (prayer is when ask God to bring you out of your state of backsliding into fellowship with God (Ps. 119:176).

20. There are prayers of dedication (prayer is when you tell God that you want to be dedicated to doing His work and will – Isaiah 6:8).

21. There are prayers for spiritual growth (prayer is when you ask God to help you grow and become spiritually mature in life – Hebrews 13:20-21).

C. The Scope of Prayer

Here is further outline to help you specifically learn what to pray for in your time of praying.

1. You are to pray for the leaders of our country and all those in authority – 1 Timothy 2:2.

2. You are to pray that all men would be saved – 1 Timothy 2:1,4.
3. You are to pray for all the saints - Ephesians 6:18.
4. You are to pray that believers would follow God's will and grow in their Christian life – Col. 1:9-19; Heb. 13:21.
5. You are to pray for the sick – James 5:14.
6. You are to pray for your enemies – Matthew 5:44.
7. You are to pray for your friends – Job 42:8.
8. You should pray for pastors – 1 Thess. 5:25.
9. You should pray for Israel – Romans 10:1; Psalms 122:6.
10. You should pray for backsliders – 1 John 5:16.
11. You should pray for the spreading of truth. – 2 Thess. 3:1; Col. 4:3.
12. You should pray for sinners to be reconciled to God – 2 Cor. 5:20.
13. You should pray for opportunities to help increase the faith of others - 1 Thess. 3:10.

D. Prayer For Individual Needs

To put it simply, you are to pray about everything before God. Because God knows everything about you (Psalms 139:1-6), you can pray with openness and be very candid with Him. As you pray you should share with God all that is on your heart. He already knows your heart anyway. You can talk to God about “everything” (1 Peter 5:7 – “all”; Phil. 4:6 – “everything”). You may sometimes wonder if God is interested with the little things of your life. Some Christians

think God is only interested with what they call the big things. Well, the fact of the matter is that there are no big things to God. What is big to God? Everything to God is small, so we are told to pray about everything.

You can talk to God about all of your concerns and problems in life. You can talk to Him about your desires, disappointments, duties, fears, pleasures, weaknesses and sins. Learn to be very frank and honest with God. God wants you to come to Him in prayer with the simplicity of a child. He wants you to depend upon Him and have a loving relationship with Him through prayer. At the same time be very reverent to the God who is your Creator and Savior. When you pray express deep reverence to God for who He is and what He has done for you.

Remember:

“The God who ordained His plan for your life also ordained the means to accomplish His ordered plan.”

Prayer is the means or avenue by which God accomplishes His perfect plan for your life. *God's plan works in connection with God's people praying.* This keeps life exciting and prayer as a needed ministry. It gives prayer the nature of a fuse, which can light the firecracker and bring God's exploding blessing upon your life.

The facts about prayer and God's providence are these:

1. God does some things in answer to our prayers.
2. God does things contrary to the prayers made.
3. God does some things without any one's praying.

But you can be sure of one thing, God always does something!

In God's foreknowledge He knows everything that will take place and takes everything into account that will happen in connection with our lives. And in His providence or the outworking of His plans and purposes for our lives, God has chosen to include our prayers and man's response to Him. God has chosen to fulfill many of His plans for our lives through prayer. This means that there is always perfect agreement between what God knows and what God has ordained or

decreed to happen in His providence and how God brings His providential plan for our lives to completion through the ministry of prayer. If you do not pray for the things that God wants you to get by prayer, then you will not get them.

God was so ingenious in His providential planning that He devised a system whereby a Christian can actually refuse to pray for things that God wants them to have. Also, a Christian can pray for things that God does not want them to have. Furthermore, God only does some things in answer to prayer. And in the end, if nobody prays about what God wants done, then He will do them any way because He is God!

E. How do you pray?

1. You can pray audibly to God (Psalm 77:1).

When you pray to God, you can pray out loud with your voice. In fact, you should practice praying out loud in your own prayer time and in your devotional time with the family or other believers. There is a need to learn to pray audibly or out loud to others. When using your voice, you are better able to concentrate on your words and control the words that you say. In return, learning to pray audibly will help you to pray with other new Christians. This in return will teach them how to pray as they listen to your own example of audible prayer. Learning to pray through the example of older godly Christians is important to a new convert. People who learn to pray audibly also can pray in public and within social gatherings in a much easier fashion. Learning to pray audibly will give you the opportunity to teach others how to pray and be a spiritual teacher to them.

It is both needful and spiritually profitable to learn how to pray. Only as you learn how to pray can you really start talking with God and fellowshiping with Him, praising God for what He has done for you and asking God for His help in your time of need.

2. You can pray quietly to God within your own heart.

This is when you pray to God through silent meditation and talk to Him in an inaudible way (Psalms 139:1-6). God can hear your prayer

without you audibly speaking to Him because he already knows your thoughts before you even pray. This means God is omniscient and knows what you pray even before you pray it. This also means that you can pray silently to God and He will know exactly what you are praying to Him. The point is this. You must pray to God and learn how to pray. There is no short cut or magical routine to learn how to pray. You learn by doing! This is how you learn how to do everything else in life.

F. Why Do You Pray?

1. You are to pray because God commands you to pray (Luke 18:1).

Whenever the Lord tells us to do something, it's for our own good and benefit. We must believe Him and obey what He tells us to do. Only as we begin to pray can we begin to experience the wonder and blessing of the Christian life. In fact, Jesus promises that prayer will keep us from fainting in life. Prayer will keep you from losing heart and becoming discouraged. It will keep you from suffering depression and all that is associated with depression. Prayer is the answer! Think about this. Prayer can keep you from nerve pills and pop psychologists. Prayer can keep you from folding up in life and going down under. Through prayer we find the needed strength and comfort that we need to keep us from going to pieces in life. Prayer is still the answer.

2. You are to pray because God wants you to be dependent upon Him (Psalms 18:6; 57:2; 61:1-2; 62:8; Mark 10:47-51; Heb. 4:16).

Prayer demonstrates your dependency upon God to help you through all of life's demands and pressures. Prayer brings you to your knees and shows your real dependency upon God. You will soon learn that life will become less of a burden and weight to yourself, if you learn to pray to God and really depend upon Him for His strength and direction? Prayer is the way to depend upon God for His divine help.

3. You are to pray in order to receive blessing from God (Psalms 118:5; Jeremiah 33:3).

Prayer is the way to receive new and great blessings within your Christian life. It's the way to discover many new spiritual blessings that you never knew about before or could possibly dream about. Prayer is the channel by which God can begin to work in your life and bring His great blessing upon your life. You need to call upon God through the ministry of prayer and expect God to begin to work through your life. You are to pray to God for strength, victory, assistance and the help to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit within your life, such as love, joy, peace and patience. Prayer is the way God floods His overwhelming blessings into your life.

4. You are to pray so you can worship God (Psalm 5:1-2).

Worship is the missing jewel in the lives of many Christians. We will devote a separate section in this manual to explain how you can worship God. For now, let us understand that we can worship God through the avenue of prayer. We contact God and come into His presence through prayer. When we do this, we can "meditate" upon God as Psalms 5:1 says. The word "meditate" means to actually ponder upon God in a pleasurable way. This of course means to reflect upon God's wonderful splendor and the glory of God's person, such as His greatness, magnificence, holiness and righteousness. And then through prayer we express our thanks and love back to Him for His mercy and grace upon our lives. Never forget that you worship God through prayer and ultimately ascribe honor and praise to God. Prayer needs to be a time of worship and not merely a routine legalistic exercise that we pass through.

Charles Spurgeon said:

"I have found, in my own spiritual life, that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit. The habit of regular morning and evening prayer is one which is indispensable to a believer's life, but the prescribing of the length of prayer, and the constrained remembrance of so many persons and subjects, may gender unto bondage, and strangle prayer rather than assist it."

5. You are to pray so you can change you mind and feeling about God and His will (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Many times you don't really think of this; however, the actual act and heart of prayer does something to you. Prayer does not always change the circumstances that you are in but it does change you as a person. As you pray, you will find your attitude being changed within your heart. This is what happened to the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Paul prayed three times for God to take away his thorn in the flesh, which was some physical infirmity. However, God chose to not take the thorn away. God can do what He pleases with whomsoever He pleases, whenever He pleases to do so. Why? It's because God is sovereign.

Instead of freeing Paul from this thorn, God gave Paul the assurance through his time of meditation and prayer, that the thorn had to stay because it was God's will. Also, in Paul's time of prayer he was given a new attitude about what God's will was for his own life. God's will was not to remove the thorn but help Paul to bear the thorn. And through His praying he found a new source of strength that would help him to endure his suffering and a new attitude ("glory in my infirmities," "therefore I take pleasure infirmities").

This is why we must always pray for God's will to be done when we pray to God. Prayer can bring a change of attitude toward God and toward our circumstances in life, even though the outward circumstances are not changed. And remember, attitude is everything! You must learn to possess a good attitude toward God's will for your life. This can be accomplished as we pray to God and submit to God's will through our time of prayer.

Dr. Lehman Strauss has said:

"God knows when something should be changed, and He knows when our hearts need changing."

Philippians 4:6-7 tells us to not worry about anything ("be careful for nothing"), but pray about everything ("In everything by prayer"). Prayer is to be done in order to overcome the worry of the heart.

The little poem goes like this:
"I've joined the new Don't Worry Club
And now I hold my breath
I'm so scared I'm going to worry
That I'm worried half to death."

Someone has said:

“I’m so loaded up with worries that if anything happened to me this week it would be two weeks before I could get around to worrying about it.”

If you are overcome by worry, then you must start practicing a prayer life that will overcome your sin of worry. As we pray we overcome worry by learning to thank God for all His blessings but also thanking Him for the outcome of your situation, no matter what it might be. As a result of prayer, your circumstance might not change, but your heart attitude will change. Your worry will give way to peace (vs. 7). Your attitude of despair and worry can be transformed into an attitude of acceptance and peace toward the situation, which you face.

Prayer will sometimes change the circumstances, and prayer will sometimes change the person, which is you. Prayer is designed to get our eyes off of our own will and bring God’s will into focus within our life. Prayer does change things. Prayer changes us!

G. What Are the Rules For Praying?

1. You must pray addressing the Godhead.

Many Christians wonder which person they should address in their prayer life. Jesus spoke about addressing the Father in prayer as a result of the resurrection and ascension of Christ into Heaven (John 16:23-27). In this passage of Scripture Jesus was telling the disciples to address their prayers to the Father, realizing that the Father would be available to listen to them and answer their prayers in view of Christ’s departure into Heaven. Christ would open a new pathway into God’s presence that would allow the believer to speak to the Father in an intimate manner. So you should address the Father in your prayer life. You should talk to the Father in your time of prayer.

Through the Holy Spirit’s ministry within your heart, you will sense a new awareness that God is now your Heavenly Father, who is in control over your life and that He desires to hear from you (Galatians 4:6). Thus, you will want to address Him as the Father. In the prayer which Jesus gave His disciples to pray, He also shared how they should pray to the Father (Matthew 6:9). When we pray, it is the

normal response to talk to God the Father since He is our new spiritual Father over our lives.

Paul spoke about addressing the Father in his time of praying (see Ephesians 3:14). Peter also spoke about addressing the Father (1 Peter 1:17). Jesus also addressed the Father in His time of prayers (John 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25). These verses seem to indicate that believers should usually and normally call upon God the Father in their time of prayer. It is the normal response to pray to the Father. As a child of the heavenly Father, we will normally feel the urge to address God as our Father because of the new intimate awareness and relationship we have with Him. This is because Christ's intercessory work allows us to come into the very throne room of God and talk to the Father (Heb. 1:3; 7:25).

Of course, it would seem proper to call upon the name of Jesus Christ for salvation (1 Cor. 1:2) as we express faith in Him (Rom. 10:13). However, after expressing faith in Christ it would be the normal response to address the Father in our time of praying. Nevertheless, it is perfectly normal and a very natural thing for the Christian to thank Jesus for dying for their sins while praying. It was not the Father or the Holy Spirit that died on the cross, Jesus Christ died in our place. You can address Christ in your time of prayers as well. You can pray to the Son since you are His servant and are to seek His guidance, help, and victory in your life.

There may also be an appropriate time when you can pray to the Holy Spirit. When you come to the study of the Bible and your time of devotion, you can pray to the Holy Spirit, and ask for His teaching ministry. It is the function or ministry of the Holy Spirit to teach the Christian the wonderful truths about the Bible and Christ (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:9-11). I see no reason not to address the Holy Spirit and ask Him to be your personal teacher and revealer of Biblical truth. We might also address the Holy Spirit and ask Him to reveal His power to our lives for witnessing (Acts 1:8). Many times we are failures in our witnessing attempts because we forgot to pray to the Holy Spirit for power. However, we must remember that the Holy Spirit is not the Son or the Father. So we should not address the Spirit in all of our praying.

There needs to be a balanced approach in our prayer life. We should major on addressing the Father, which is our normal response to God. Then we should also address the Son for His victory and blessings that He has brought into our lives. Furthermore, we can address the Holy Spirit for His power and teaching ministry for our lives. A balance approach is what is needed within your Christian life. All the members of the godhead are coequal and can be addressed in your time of prayer. You may address several different Persons within the Godhead in your time of prayer and be appropriate in doing so.

2. You must pray in Jesus' name.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray in this manner (see John 14:13-14; 16:23-24, 26). What did Jesus mean by this oft-repeated statement, to pray in His name? A name in Bible times represented who a person was and what a person had done. Jesus meant first of all that the disciples were to recognize that He was the only way of access into the Father's presence (John 14:6). When Christ would leave the earth in His ascension the disciples needed to recognize that they could only approach the Father and speak to Him through the path of salvation that Jesus had opened up to them.

Your prayers cannot find their way to God unless they come to God through Christ. The only people who have the right of access to God are those who recognize the Son. It's through the Son that you have been forgiven and accepted into the presence of the Father. If you deny to enter the Father's presence through the Son, then you have flopped in your prayer life (Eph. 2:18). Every Christian can only have access into the Father's presence because they are seated in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:6). These verses point to the position of acceptance that the believer has because of the sacrifice of Christ on their behalf. Christ is in Heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father providing us with eternal forgiveness and acceptance before God (Hebrews 7:25). The practical implications of this are that when we pray, we can go through Christ, and have a new special access into the Father's presence. The Father will hear our prayers and we will receive answer to our prayers.

There are many people today who pray to God but their prayers are not answered. This is because they are not saved and they have no rightful claim into the Father's presence through Christ. You must be saved and know that Christ has given you the right to come into the presence of the Father and talk to Him. Without Christ, no person will get into the Father's presence or receive His attention. To pray in the name of Jesus means to pray recognizing the merits of Christ saving blood which can alone bring you into contact with God the Father (Hebrews 10:19). This means that we can pray to God knowing that our sins are forgiven by the blood of Christ and that we have access or acceptance into the holy Father's presence by that blood. The disciples simply needed to be reminded of this wonderful truth.

When Jesus said that the disciples should use His name in prayer, He also meant that we should use a common formula in all of time of praying. We should pray recognizing that the only approach to God is through the person and work of Christ. This means that we should end our prayers by using Christ's name. Using the name of Jesus in our prayers is essential to getting answers to prayers. Prayer in the name of Christ has power with God.

When we fail to incorporate the name of Jesus in our prayers, then we lose the power of prayer and indicate that we can get into the throne room of God without the help of Jesus. This is a real insult to God. Whenever I hear some Christian fail to end their prayers in the name of Jesus, it makes me cringe. First, they are not listening to what Jesus said to do. Second, they certainly are not respecting the work that Jesus did for them in order to give them access into the throne room of Heaven where God the Father can hear and answer their prayer. Third, their prayers become powerless and unprevailing before God. You must learn to pray according to God's way and not your own way. Your own way will not get the job done!

Praying in Jesus' name would also imply that you are praying in order to glorify the Father (John 17:2; 12:28). These verses were spoken in view of Christ's coming death and indicate that when we pray recognizing that Jesus is the way of salvation and access into the Father's presence, then the Father is glorified. The glory of the Father should be your supreme motivation as we pray in the name of Jesus.

The Father's name and saving plan through His Son is uplifted and honored when you address the Father through the name of Jesus.

To pray using the name of Jesus also means to pray recognizing His authority and control over your life and the situations you face in your life. The name of Jesus Christ stands for absolute authority (Phil. 2:9-11). When we pray in the name of Christ we are also indicating His absolute authority over our lives and the situations that we are facing in our lives even as we pray. We are indicating that Jesus can answer our prayer any way He ultimately sees fit to do. When we pray in Jesus' name we are indicating that His will and program are to be accomplished no matter what. Praying in Jesus' name is placing ourselves under the authority of the Master of the universe and Master of our lives! Thus, when Christ said that He will answer our prayers and give us everything that we ask for "in my name" (John 16:23), He actually meant that He would answer every prayer that is made in connection with His sovereign purpose for our life.

Christ would answer the prayer that is done in connection with His sovereign plan and purpose for our lives. Christ would answer every prayer that corresponds to His sovereign will and rule in our life. Praying in the name of Jesus then means that we must pray leaving the results in His will and believe that Jesus Christ will answer every request that is lined up with His good purpose for our lives. It is praying and believing that the Master will do what is best!

Eliza M. Hickok wrote:
"I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know: God answers prayer.
I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the guise I thought.
I leave my prayer to him alone
Whose will is wiser than my own."

The simple fact is that God always comes through! Not always at the time we would like and not always in the way we would like. But we can be sure that God always moves and is working.

3. You must pray for definite requests.

There must be definite asking or definite requests when we come to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 3:20; Mark 10:47-51). These verses suggest that we must ask for definite things when we pray, whether they are things for our personal lives, or the lives of others. We should come to God and be specific to him in our time of prayer. My daughter prayed the other day and asked God to help everybody. After the prayer I reminded her that she needs to be more specific in her time of prayer. She needs to zero in on prayer requests and not speak in generalities. This is how we train our children to pray. By the way, children are to learn how to pray from their parents. This is why we as parents need to learn how to pray and mean business with God. Your prayers should be more specific then, "God bless all the missionaries."

Praying to God with definite requests for His help and assistance in life shows our recognition of need, our dependency upon God and our faith in His ability and willingness to answer our prayers.

4. You must pray in faith.

When you come to the place of prayer, you must have faith in God. You must believe or have faith in the God who can really answer your prayers. Unbelief does not please God. Prayer without faith is not prayer at all. God encourages us to pray by promising to answer our prayers (see Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24). This provides real incentive to pray! It gives me something to believe. God promises to answer my prayers. God wants to answer my prayers. Many times we limit God by what we think is possible with Him. However, the Bible says that nothing is impossible with God (Mark 10:27). God does answer our prayers! He is ready, willing and waiting to answer our prayers. This is why we should pray in confidence or faith to Him.

Of course, these verses cannot be used to promote a Jesus MasterCard whereby you can charge to the account of Jesus any greedy thing that you want and Jesus will return it to you. These statements by Jesus are given on the grounds that what the disciples ask for would be according to God's will and program for their lives. Paul prayed believing God, but did not receive the answer to his prayer in the way that he believed he would (2 Cor. 12:7-9). We must remember that Jesus also taught the disciples to pray or ask in Jesus'

name so that they could receive everything that they ask for (John 14:13; 16:23).

You will remember that to ask in Jesus' name means to lay your request in the hands of the sovereign ruler, realizing that He knows what is best for our lives and will answer every one of our prayers according to His own will. This means that when you come to pray before God, you must pray believing that God will answer your prayers. There must be a confident expectation to receive from God. However, you must pray in the name of Jesus recognizing that He must ultimately grant your requests according to His plan and program for your life. When you do not see the answer to your prayer in the way that you prayed for, it's because Jesus has another way to answer your prayer. Jesus had something else in mind! None the less, Jesus establishes the truth that when we pray, we are to pray with our faith faucet turned on so that it is overflowing. We cannot expect great things from God if we do not ask in faith. The point Jesus was making in these verses is that we need to pray with an increasing faith in His power and provision for our lives. We need to pray believing that God can and that God will!

There is no point to coming before God in prayer if we have no confidence in Him or His ability to answer the prayer (1 John 5:14-16). Here John drives home the point that when we petition God about a certain matter and it's according to His program for our lives, then He will answer our prayer request. We can be confident about this. We can be sure that He will. That is why we must come to God in great faith today. The prayers of faith will get God's will done on earth and in our own personal lives. Faithless praying is useless praying!

Faith in the time or prayer is richly rewarded by seeing answers to your prayers (Hebrews 11:6). You will notice that your faith is to rest in a person ("in him"). Mark 11:22 says that you are to "have faith in God." Your faith is to be rooted in God and His ability to answer your prayer. You must beware of having faith in your own faith! True faith is not in your boldness and daring ability to step out and ask for great things from God. Real faith is in God. It rests in His ultimate plan and will to answer your requests. It rests in His ability and power to grant my request. We believe in God's omniscience, omnipotence and

faithfulness. You are to never pray doubting God (see James 1:5-7). James says that we can pray in a “wavering” fashion, which means to pray with a divided heart. “Maybe God will answer this prayer, maybe He won’t.” “Maybe God will help me to overcome this sin today, maybe He won’t.” To “waver” simply means that you doubt God’s ability to answer your prayers. When you pray in such an unbelieving manner like this, then you can be compared to the waves of the sea, which are tossed to and fro by the wind. Wavy praying is like the waves of the sea. This type of prayer goes back and forth, believing and not believing. In reality, it’s not true faith at all because true faith never doubts God. True faith is unlike the waves of the sea because it does not move back and forth but remains firmly stationary in God’s ability to answer prayer.

5. You must pray being morally clean.

The Bible clearly reveals to us that we cannot expect God to hear or answer our prayers when we are not spiritually clean within our lives. When I have unconfessed sin within my own heart then God does not hear me (Psalms 66:18; Proverbs 15:29). When we are living in a righteous manner, only then can God hear and answer our prayers. When you approach God in the time of prayer and have sin reigning within your heart and life, then you are worshipping God in a phony manner. We all know that God hates phony worship (see Isaiah 59:1-2). Isaiah the prophet is saying that you should not blame God for refusing to grant your requests when you are harboring sin within your heart.

God is not losing His hearing! You have simply lost your phone service to Heaven because you have allowed sin to rule your heart and life. The blame rests with you and not with God! You are responsible for God’s silence. You have raised the barrier between yourself and God and God cannot answer your prayers until you confess your sin (1 John 1:9). God says that we are just going through religious forms, rituals and wasting out time when our heart is not right with God (Isaiah 1:13-15). There is such a thing as sinful praying. Sinful praying is when we pray with unconfessed sin in our heart and life. We must seek to clean up our lives in order for God to once again hear our prayers (Isaiah 1:16). We must put ourselves on praying ground by acknowledging our sin and confessing it before the

Lord (Ezra 9:6; Daniel 9:4-5). We must simply remember that God does not hear us just because we have great emotional zeal or agony in our time of praying. God hears us when our heart is clean. Praying when we are disobeying God is powerless praying. Right living is a necessary condition for praying. We must search out and correct the causes of our prayer failures. The root cause of course is always sin. Only the prayers of a righteous man can touch the heart of God (James 5:16).

6. You must pray while abiding in Christ.

This point is linked with the previous point in some measure. It deals with our daily relationship with Christ (see John 15:4, 7). To abide in Christ means to remain in fellowship with Christ by allowing Christ to control your life. It means to walk with Christ in sweet communion. This means that when we are fellowshiping with Christ through our commitment to God's Word, ("my words abide in you") then we will be devoted to His will. You cannot fellowship with God unless you are filled and controlled with the Word of God. And you cannot pray correctly unless you understand what the Bible says is correct and true. The blessed result of fellowshiping with God and being filled with the Word of God is that our prayers are fruitful. They will be answered because we are praying in accordance with His Word which is true and right (John 14:13, 14).

You can only receive answers to your prayers because you are following His Word and allowing the truth of His Word to permeate your mind or thinking. Our Word filled thinking will result in God giving us the right desires to pray for (Psalm 37:4) and result in spiritual prayers that are connected to God's will. It's these types of prayers that we will receive answers to within our prayer life. They are spiritual prayers that are given through the believer's understanding of what the Bible says to be true. They are not selfish prayers for our personal lives of greediness. Rather, these are prayers, which God has directed us to pray. They are prayers that mean business with God.

Here is a summary concerning what we are talking about in this point. Abiding is the secret of a successful prayer life. When our communion with Christ is cut off, so is the pipeline of prayer. The

closer we get to the Lord, the more we will learn to think His thoughts after Him. The more we get to know Him through His Word, the more we will understand His will. The more our will agrees with His, the more we can be sure of having our prayers answered, which are prayed according to His will.

7. You must pray with thanksgiving.

The believer must remember to express gratitude and thanksgiving in his time of prayer. All asking with no thanksgiving makes your praying lopsided. The rule of thanksgiving is important to remember as you pray (Phil 4:6). A young girl once quoted this verse and made a mistake. She quoted the verse by saying, "Be thankful for nothing and anxious about everything." This is the way many people live. This is also the mistake, which you can make. You can be thankful for nothing. Of course, the verse says we are to be thankful about everything. It is always rude to come to God and ask without thanking Him for past blessings and His present goodness in your life. Sometimes we pray in a rude fashion failing to properly thank God.

There is another verse that suggests thankfulness to you (1 Thess. 5:18). We may not be thankful for the actual circumstance or trying event that we are facing in life, but we can be thankful in the trying event or circumstance since we know that God is working in many ways and God is always good (see Acts 16:25). Here we see that prayer and praise go hand in hand. This is a blessed combination. These men were suffering hardship and yet they were found to be praising God (2 Cor. 6:10). Do you praise and thank God in your sufferings and hardships of life? You can thank God as you count the many blessings that He has given to you and how He is working in the present situation at hand. You should be a thankful Christian in your life and prayer life (Psalm 100:4).

Please note that when our hearts are not thankful to God, then we go into the gates and court of God's presence in a rude manner. In fact, the gates may eventually be closed when we fail to thank Him for His wonderful blessings in our life. When we fail to thank God for His blessing we rob God of an honor due Him and we render our prayer powerless. The gratitude of our heart pleases God. There is the need to express thankfulness to God for the blessings of salvation, peace,

joy, health and safety. We need to remember the blessings and benefits of God's grace in our lives. There are multitudes of things that you can thank God for in your time of prayer. It may do you well to make a list of some things that you can be thankful for and remember them in your prayer life. "Count your blessings." Prayer thrives best in the soil of thanksgiving. I think that prayer without thanksgiving becomes ineffective. One of the most important sacrifices we can make to God is thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15).

8. You must pray persistently.

D.L. Moody

"Some men's prayers need to be cut short at both ends and set on fire in the middle."

This simply means that your prayers can lack life and aggressiveness. Prayers can be full of fancy words and good sound but lack real aggressiveness and confidence that God will answer them. Your prayer life can lose the burning fire or zeal that all prayer is to have. Many Christians can become very ho hum in their prayer life and never pray with any depth. They never possess a deep desire to see prayer answered. They pray without any real confidence in God and without any expectancy or return from God. God is looking for prayer that is on fire. When God's people have a prayer life that is on fire, then they can see answers to prayer and be blessed in life.

The Bible teaches that you should learn to pray in a gracious and yet persistent manner (Luke 11:5-10). This is the parable of the persistent friend. Jesus shared how a friend can come to your home late in the evening and ask for bread. The only way he can get the bread was to ask in an aggressive and persistent manner. This is the thought behind the word "importunity".

The word "importunity" conveys the ideas of urgency, earnestness, boldness, perseverance, persistence and relentlessness. It is the kind of persistent asking like a desperate beggar would do. Only when the man asked in this manner, could he receive as many loaves as he needed. We are to pray to God in a similar fashion (vs. 9-10). We are to pray with urgency, earnestness and with a note of desperation attached to our prayers. Our prayers are to be on fire. They are to be

prayers of expected return and prayers offered up to God with tremendous faith. In these verses, Jesus encouraged people to be persistent in their prayer life. He does not want us to feel ashamed when we pray in a persevering and persistent manner. They are to be aggressively persistent in their prayer life, not to change God's mind, but to receive answers to their prayers.

You must remember that Jesus was simply establishing a key principle for all praying within the Christian life. The principle is this. You are to really pray! You must pray with urgency and earnestness. He is not saying that you will get everything that you ask for when you pray. However, you will get the very "good gifts" that God intends to give to your life when you pray with real desire, earnestness and faith (vs. 13). God gives good gifts to His people, which are those gifts which are according to His will and which He intends to give in answer to prayer. But how do we really receive the good things that God wants to give to our lives? We must get our prayer life on fire and keep on knocking at the door of Heaven and keep on praying with expectancy that God will answer our prayers (verse 9).

The verbs "ask," "seek" and "knock" are in the present tense and mean to keep on asking, seeking and knocking. This means that when you pray you should keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking at the door of God's throne room in order to receive answers to your prayers. Many times you fail to receive answers to your prayers because you only knock once! You only ring the doorbell one or two times and then walk away. You do not give God time to work in His own way and answer the prayer. Jesus is teaching a principle for all prayer. Prayer is to be done in a bold and aggressive manner. We must ring the bell of Heaven when we pray and keep ringing it until we realize that we are asking amiss or that God chooses to answer our prayer in a different manner than we are praying.

Charles Spurgeon used to say:

"Prayer pulls the rope down below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give only an occasional jerk at the rope. But he who communicates with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously with all his might"

You must continue to pull on the rope and pray about a matter until you receive an answer or at least realize how God is going to answer the prayer. You do not always know what God's will is when you pray; therefore, you must pray with the understanding that God may answer your prayer in a different way than you expected or God may simply refuse to answer your prayer by saying, "No." When you come to the place of prayer, you must simply cast yourself upon the Lord and believe that He will answer whatever your prayer is according to His own will, plan and timing. None the less, we are to always pray with a spirit of urgency, desire, earnestness and persistence in all of our prayers. Prayer is getting God's will done on earth and in our lives. And God has told us to pray with great earnestness, urgency and confidence in Him in order to receive answers to our prayers that line up with His will and program for our lives.

The poet Adam Baum wrote:
"Pray on, when rough and dark your pathway,
And you cannot see the light;
When every spark of hope has vanished,
And bright day has turned to night.
Pray on, for God doth surely hear you,
Noting well each sad request;
Pray then in faith, truly believing
That He always gives what's best."

You must simply learn to really talk to God! You must start to get back to the old-fashioned type of prayer where you mean business with God and want God to shower down answers to our prayers. This does not mean that you can command God to give you anything or demand payment from God. This type of praying is a stench in the nostrils of God. Puny man cannot command God to do anything (Isaiah 40:22). The creature must always subject himself to the Creator.

Dr. John Walvoord put it well when he said:
"Prayer is much like a check to be countersigned by two parties. I sign the check and send it up to heaven. If Jesus Christ also signs it, it does not matter how large it is -- it'll be honored."

Realizing this and believing this to be true will revolutionize your prayer life. We will start to pray with new zeal and confidence in God. We will start to pray with a new spirit of urgency, relentlessness and boldness. Importunity prayer is bold prayer. This means that we can pray with great confidence and boldness knowing that God hears our prayers and answers them (see Hebrews 4:16). Bold praying is not demanding prayer that commands the Creator to do something. You never demand God to give you anything! You are not greater than God, God is greater than you. Bold praying is confident praying that is full of life, zeal, earnestness perseverance and persistence.

Abraham is a perfect example of this type of praying (see Genesis 18:22-33). He prayed for God to spare the righteous souls within Sodom and through his persistent or persevering praying God actually agreed to honor his request. God agreed to not destroy Sodom for ten righteous people. In the New Testament the Syrophenician woman prayed a prayer of importunity (see Matthew 15:22-28). Persistent and confident prayer touches the heart of God. Never forget this. God is looking for heartfelt, earnest and believing prayer. This is the way you should pray in all of your prayers. There needs to be a real boldness and belief when you pray knowing that you are praying to the God of eternity.

H. Why Does God Not Always Hear Your Prayers?

1. Because you may have a bad marital relationship.

This fact is very true. The two marriage partners may be fighting and clawing at one another. When there is dissension in the marriage relationship instead of harmony, God will not hear your prayers (see 1 Peter 3:7). The word "hindered" means to cut off one's path in order to impede their process. The idea suggested by this word means to have your prayer lifeline cut off and the whole matter of prayer becomes deadened before God. When marriage partners are full of anger at each other and disharmony abounds in the marriage unit, then God says your prayers are in one sense cut off. God will not hear them. Bad marital relationships choke off the power of prayer that you need in your life and the hearing ear of God. This is why marriage partners must be open to one another and lay everything out on the table and forgive one another. There needs to be

restitution and harmony in the marriage relationship in order for God to once again hear your prayers.

2. Because you may not be showing love to other believers.

This is also a very real challenge for your own personal life. You need to practice expressing sacrificial love to other Christians. The Bible says that when we are not concerned about the needs of other Christians and fail to help them, then we become disobedient to God's commands and find ourselves not receiving answers to our prayers (see 1John 3:16-22). This text says that we must be living in obedience to God's command, which in the context deals with helping other Christians in their time of need. When we are practicing this love toward others, then the floodgates will be opened. God will answer our prayers only as we are obedient to what He tells us to do (vs. 22). God reaches out to bless your life in a greater way as you reach out to other people. Loving others in a sacrificial way can mean more answered prayer in your own life. Once again, this does not mean that God will answer every one of your prayers if you take some time to help a brother move next week. What it does mean is that when you express sacrificial love to others on a regular basis, then you can be sure that God is hearing your prayers and that God will answer those prayers that line up with His program and will for your life.

Remember that God only answers prayers that He intends to answer. Furthermore, God answers prayer in His own way and in His own time. If we ask for something, which God intends to answer, the promise is made that God will answer our prayer. This is all based upon the fact that we were expressing love toward other people. It's important that we don't turn off our expression of love to others. When we do, the lifeline of prayer is once again hindered (see Proverbs 21:13).

3. Because you are not willing to forgive other people.

Jesus spoke about this matter in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 6:14-15). As a Christian, you can come to God in prayer and ask for forgiveness for the sins you commit in your own life, but God will not forgive you. This occurs when you are not willing to forgive

other people for the evil things that they may have done against your life. God requires that we forgive others in our daily Christian lives before He can forgive us. To not forgive others and pray for forgiveness is hypocrisy. It's quite understandable that when we fail to forgive others, our prayer life is cut off. God will not hear our prayers and grant us forgiveness. Of course, this also means that God will not hear our prayers at all. Your prayer contact with God will be shut down like an engine that has stopped running.

4. Because you are not asking for those things which are good for your life.

Jesus promised that God the Father would answer your prayers when you pray for the good things that He wants to give to your life (see Matt. 7:9-11). God always gives good things to His children (James 1:17). Therefore, when we pray and ask for the good things and right things that God wants us to have, then we can be sure that the Father will give them to us. The question is "What constitutes the good things that God wants to give to us?" We know that His peace, joy and godly character are some of the good things that He gives to His children. Also, there are many other good things that God blesses our lives with, such as health, jobs, family and material wealth. The promise is simply this. God the Father only gives those things that are good for our own personal lives. He will withhold those things that are not good. However, God always gives those things that are best for our lives and are in keeping with His will for us. God always meets the needs of His children.

5. Because you have faulty relations with God.

We have talked about this in the previous point under rules for praying (see Psalms 66:18). Let me just say again that when you have sin in your life, you cannot expect God to hear and answer your prayers. Sin breaks down the prayer barrier and keeps God's blessing and ears closed to your cries. Sin in your life shuts the door of Heaven's blessing from your life. When you confess your sin to God the door of God's blessing is once again opened unto you.

What are the two primary essentials that we need to remember so we do not develop a faulty relationship with God?

a. Holy hands (1 Timothy 2:8)

“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

Paul stated two essentials for effective prayer, and the first was “holy hands.” Obviously this means a holy life. “Clean hands” was symbolic of a blameless life (2 Sam. 22:21; Ps. 24:4). If we have sin in our lives, we cannot pray and expect God to answer (Ps. 66:18).

b. Holy relationships (1 Timothy 2:8)

This flows out of the first matter that Paul dealt with concerning holy hands. The words “without wrath” is the second essential, and requires that we be on good terms with one another. “Without anger” might be a better translation. A person who is constantly angry at others, having trouble with other believers, who is a troublemaker himself rather than a peacemaker, cannot pray and get answers from God. “Doubting” suggests that we must pray *in faith*, but the word really means “disputing.” When we have anger in the heart, we often have open disagreements with others. We should “do all things without murmurings and disputings” (Phil. 2:14).

Effective praying, then, demands that I be in a right relationship with God (“holy hands”) and with my fellow believers (“without murmurings and disputings”). Jesus taught the same truth (Mark 11:24–26). If we spent more time *preparing* to pray and getting our hearts right before God, our prayers would be more effective. God will not hear a person’s prayer who does not have holy hands and holy actions and relationships before other people. When there is sin in our lives we develop a faulty relationship with God and God closes His ears to our prayers.

6. Because you pray in a repetitive manner.

Jesus warned the Pharisees about this type of praying (see Matt. 6:7). These prayers were very repetitive in their nature. Their prayers were nothing more than a little ritual instead of real relationship with God. The sad fact was this. Their prayers were nothing more than a

bunch of empty chatter, which amounted to nothing. Jesus says that people will not be heard for their much speaking in prayer. God is not looking for repetitive prayer that becomes meaningless and senseless. God is looking for prayer that is meaningful and from the heart. He is also looking for prayer that is without showmanship and hypocrisy (see Matt. 23:14). Be on guard so you do not turn your own prayer life into a time of emptiness and some type of ritualistic list. God will not hear this type of praying. God is looking for prayer that comes from the heart and which is earnest and real.

7. Because you pray without a giving spirit.

God will not hear the prayer of a stingy saint. When a Saint fails to give of his own love, time, strength and money for the Lord and others, then he cannot expect God to give back to him when he prays (see Prov. 21:13). If we stop our ears to the cries of needy people, then God will close His ears to our cries in the prayer room and fail to grant our requests. It does not make sense when a miserly Christian asks God for something. God keeps accurate records of our deeds. What we sow in giving always will come back in multitudes of blessings both in this life and the life to come (see 2 Cor. 9:6-7).

We can be sure that God expects us to reach out to others before He will reach out to us and bless our lives with answered prayer (see Luke 6:38). The entire context that this verse revolves around being gracious, forgiving, considerate, selfless, loving and generous to other people (see 6:27-37). We are to give others not only our money, but also our love, time and strength. The point cannot be missed. If we give to others, then God will see to it that other people will bring blessing into our lives. Many blessings will come back to us. And it may not always be monetary blessings. It may be blessings such as seeing people saved, growing in the Lord, and people sacrificing their time to help us in some fashion.

As we learn to sacrifice our lives for others, then we will find the blessings coming back into our lives in many ways. There is a reciprocal process here. We give to others and God in return gives to us through the lives of other people who have been touched by our own lives. Without the spirit of generosity and love to others, we cannot expect God to be very generous to our own lives by

answering our prayers. But remember that we do not give to get! When we do this we begin to bargain with God and are serving others out of a selfish spirit and motive. This brings us to our next point.

8. Because you pray in a selfish manner.

James addresses this issue for us (see James 4:1-3). The Christian people to whom James was writing were not asking for the kinds of spiritual things that God wanted to give to them (“ye have not, because ye ask not - vs. 2”). Many do not understand what this verse actually means. Many feel that this verse is teaching that these people failed to receive from God because they failed to ask God for things. This is not the case at all. It’s not that these people were failing to ask. The problem was that they were asking in a selfish manner. This is why they did not have answers to their prayers.

These believers were not asking for the right things or not asking out of the right motive. They had some ulterior motive behind their praying. These Christians were not praying for the things such as peace, joy, help, hope, salvation of souls and true meaning in life. Instead of asking for the things that God would be pleased with and graciously give to them, these Christians were asking for greedy things out of a wrong motive. It seems that many of the Christians were desiring material gain in their life and setting aside the spiritual matters that dealt with God’s will and what God really wanted them to pray about. James says that they “desire to have”. The implication is that these believers were greedy in their prayer time as they tried to ask God to give them what they selfishly desired in life. Because of their selfishness, God was not answering their greedy prayers.

The word “amiss” in verse 3 literally means to ask in a miserable or sickly fashion, to ask in an ill manner. The word then suggests praying in a wrong or improper way. It means to pray with the wrong intent. Praying can be motivated by personal gratification and selfish desire. This is sickly prayer. Prayer can be done with the view to get only what you want in life. The word “lusts” refers to your own desires rather than to God’s desires for your life (vs. 3). You can pray in a selfish manner and only ask for certain material things that God does not want you to have. Selfishness can overtake your prayer life.

You are naturally and basically selfish. This is why you must be careful when you pray. You do not want a selfish spirit to overtake your prayer life. When you become selfish in your prayer life, it's then that you cut the lifeline of prayer.

There are many spiritual matters that you can take before the Lord in prayer. You can pray that the fruit of the spirit would be seen in your life in a greater way and that souls would be saved. You can pray that God will help you to cope with another day and the specific challenges that are before you. However, instead of taking spiritual things to the Lord in prayer or true needs, oftentimes we can pray in a selfish manner. We either pray for things that we should not pray for or we pray with a wrong motive or intent. In any case, we try to get what we want by our own efforts. In the back of our mind, we pray to get what we ultimately want. Beware of this type of praying.

If we want something, which we do not have, we should ask God for it. If we do ask, and the prayer is unanswered, what then? It simply means that our motives may not have been pure. We probably did not want these possessions for the glory of God or for the good of our fellow men. We wanted them for our own selfish enjoyment. We wanted them to satisfy our natural appetites. God does not promise to answer such selfish prayers as these.

For example, you might pray that your business would prosper. This might be a right or wrong prayer depending on the motive of your heart. If you want your business to prosper to only buy more for your own life and leave God out of the picture, then you are praying in a selfish manner. *It is always important to examine our motives when we pray.* When you pray to God and ask for things always be sure to check your real reason for praying. You must also remember that sometimes it's not necessarily the thing that we are asking for that is wrong. Rather, it's the reason that we are asking for the particular thing that may be wrong. Our reasoning may be to gain some selfish end. You may pray that some person would get saved so your life at work would be more bearable. That is a selfish prayer.

You may pray that some person would get well so that your load would be lifted. You may pray that some person would live instead of die but may in reality be praying in a selfish way. This is because God

may want to take the person home to be with Him. Many times our desires are not God's desires and we do pray selfishly. That is why we must pray that God's will would be accomplished and keep God's viewpoint about every prayer request in our thinking. The Bible gives a prime example of selfish asking (see Luke 12:13-15). Here was a selfish request. A covetous spirit motivated this man's request.

If we are not careful, our own prayers can become very covetous (see Matt. 20:20-21). Here the mother of James and John actually asked a selfish request from the Lord. She was worshipping God and sincere at the time she asked the Lord this request. Nonetheless, it was selfish. She wanted something that Jesus could not grant her. Her request was denied. Jesus said, "Ye know not what ye ask." We must learn to examine our motives when we pray to God. Are we praying for our exaltation? Do we possess a selfish spirit when we pray?

I believe there is much praying going on today with this type of greedy spirit. I say this in view of the wealth and Gospel of success movement. Preachers are wrongly dividing the Scriptures and hiding behind certain verses in the Bible that they claim teach financial prosperity for every child of God. We must remember that no verse in the Bible is intended to stand by itself. Preachers today are inviting Christians to pray that God will make them rich and financially successful in money and wealth. I must simply ask this question, "But for what reason?" It is simply for their own greedy end. Many have ignorantly fallen into the greed syndrome of praying. God never promised to make us rich. This teaching is suited for the United States and could never be taught in a third world country. God has promised only to provide those things that we have need of in this life (Matt. 6:32-33).

If you will learn to prayerfully seek those things that are of a spiritual significance in life, God promises to meet all of your needs. Our prayers should be geared around those matters that deal with righteous living and holy living before God. They should center on those matters that are not greedy and full of personal gain.

Your prayer life can be freed from a major hindrance if you will learn to pray unselfishly. Selfishness and wrong motives or intent can

interfere with a true prayer life and cause your prayers to remain unanswered. When we begin to pray selfishly God will not hear our prayers.

I. What is the Secret to Correct Praying?

1. You must learn to delight in the Lord (Psalms 37:4).

To delight yourself in the Lord means to enjoy His presence and walk in sweet communion and fellowship with God. If you are not delighting yourself in God, then you will not be praying correctly to God. Good delighting results in good praying. The truth of the matter is this. When you are enjoying the Lord's presence and walking in fellowship with Him, then God will actually implant the proper spiritual desires within your heart. The result is that you can now pray for the very things that God wants you to pray for instead of selfish things. When you pray for the spiritual and unselfish desires that God has placed within your heart, then you will see answers to your prayers. The Holy Spirit will give us the right desires when we pray and direct our thinking so that we can pray according to God's Word and God's will and receive answers to our prayers. This brings us to another important point about unselfish praying.

2. You must learn to pray in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20).

The Charismatic church falsely concludes that praying in the Spirit means to pray in some tongue language that is really some kind of Holy Spirit inspired talk. This is an absolute travesty upon the Word of God. Praying in the Spirit has nothing whatsoever to do with tongues in the Bible. Praying in the Spirit has to do with praying under the control, filling, guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Praying in the Spirit will also help give us victory over the devil as he seeks to invade our prayer lives. This type of prayer will also help us have victory over the flesh, which also tries to interfere with our prayer lives. The command to pray in the Holy Spirit is given in the context of Ephesians six, which deals with spiritual warfare. As we pray for victory in our own lives and in the lives of other saints in the battles of life, we must be aware that Satan will try to interfere with our prayers and cause them to become selfish and carnal. He will try

to destroy or hinder our prayer life so that we might have a weakness in our battle against Him. You must remember about prayer warfare in your Christian life.

To pray in the Holy Spirit means to pray under His supervision and filling so that you do not pray selfishly and with wrong motives. When you pray under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit, you can pray prayers according to God's wisdom and God's desires instead of according to your own wisdom and desires. When we are filled with the Spirit we are controlled by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Likewise, when you pray "in the spirit" your mind and will are subject to His control. We need the leading of the Holy Spirit in our prayer lives (Romans 8:14). You must learn to avail yourself to the help and ministry of the Holy Spirit when you pray. It will deepen your prayer life.

Romans 8:26-27 also talks about another prayer ministry that the Holy Spirit actually performs for us before the presence of God. These verses tell us that we have "infirmities" or weaknesses when we come to the ministry of prayer. These infirmities have to do with our ignorance on how to pray. Many times we don't know what is best for our lives or the lives of other people when we pray. Other times we can pray selfishly instead of for the real need that is at hand. These verses suggest that the Holy Spirit actually assists us in our prayer lives so that as our prayers go up to God, they might enter the throne room as sweet smelling fragrance because they are according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit apparently reshapes our prayers and rounds them off so that they line up with God's will. The word "helpeth" means that the Holy Spirit will assist us in our time of prayer by taking our prayers into God's presence with His own added touch.

Prayer and the Holy Spirit are vitally linked together (see Zechariah 12:10). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of supplications, which is a type of prayer when a person humbly petitions God. The Holy Spirit will in the future day awaken and inspire Israel to pray for God's mercy and salvation at His return to earth. The Holy Spirit does the same for our lives today. He awakens us to our need to pray and inspires us to pray according to the will of God. He directs our praying in an unselfish manner. This is the greatest secret of all prayer. It is praying with the help and ministry of the Holy Spirit. You can only do this as you enter into the "communion of the Holy Spirit" (see 2 Cor. 13:14).

You can have an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit as you learn to yield to His help and ministry within your own prayer life. He gives us victory in our daily living and praying. This is when we are truly communing with the Holy Spirit. We are relying upon His power and help within every area of our lives.

3. You must pray according to truth (Psalms 40:8).

The Psalmist recognized that he could not accomplish God's will for his life if he did not write the truth of God's Word upon his own heart. In a similar way, we cannot accomplish praying according to the will of God unless we write the Word of God upon our heart and know how to pray according to the truth of Scriptures. You receive spiritual understanding and wisdom through your study of God's Word. The Holy Spirit teaches us the unchanging truths of the Bible in our time of Bible study and meditation (1 Cor. 2:13).

As we study the Scriptures we are learning what the Bible says about right and wrong and developing discernment and new insight concerning what God's will really is. As a result, we can now incorporate the truth of Scriptures into our everyday prayer life and begin a more effective prayer life. We can pray according to God's will instead of allowing our selfish spirit to get in the way. We can pray according to the truth of God's Word instead of wandering away from what God's Word tells us to do. Instead of praying in a selfish way and carnal way, we will submit to what God's Word says and pray in accord with the truth. If you are not careful, your prayer life can become very selfish and motivated by the circumstances surrounding your life.

In order to pray effectively and according to God's will, we must know what the Scriptures say on a given subject or practice. We must ask ourselves these questions: "Is what I am praying about right or wrong? Am I praying for something that is Biblically true or am I praying for something that is motivated by my selfishness of flesh?" After answering these questions honestly, you can incorporate the truth of God's Word into your prayer life in a very practical way. You do this by knowing the truth and how to pray. Thus, you can pray according to the truth of God's word and God's will for some given situation at hand. God always promises to "hear" and listen to prayers

that are Word-directed and according to His will (1 John 5:14 - "heareth"). On the other hand, God does not hear those prayers that become selfish and carnal in their offer. Prayers that are prayed in an openly selfish way and which do not line up with God's will as revealed in the Scriptures, will not be heard by God.

J. Does God Always Answer Your Prayers?

It is true that God always answers the prayers that He does hear. However, we must remember that God does not answer always in the way that we think He should answer. Do you realize that there has never been an unanswered prayer?

Answers to prayers will come in several ways:

a. There is a direct answer.

Sometimes we pray for a specific request and it is answered at once, without any delay. It is very thrilling to see God respond instantly by granting our request that we had prayed for. All of us are full of joy when God answers our prayers in this way (James 5:17).

b. There is a delayed answer.

God sometimes has the intention to granting our request, but delays the answer. God sometimes has intentional postponement when it comes to answering our prayers. God knows when it is best to give the thing that we have prayed for. We should not become discouraged if our request is not granted at once. We must allow God to work within His own sovereign timetable (Ecclesiastes 3:11). God's delays are not His denials.

c. There is a different answer.

Because of unknown selfishness and shortsightedness, we are not always aware of what we really need. We may not boldly ask for selfish matters; however, we can still unknowingly ask in a selfish way. Therefore, God sometimes changes the way that He decides to answer the prayer that you offer up to Him. He has the right to do this as He did with the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Paul unknowingly

prayed for relief but God changed the answer to his prayer by giving Paul grace instead of relief. God can give us a different answer to our prayers.

d. There is a denied answer.

Nobody likes to recognize this as an answer to prayer. God may decide to deny our request. Sometimes we may think that God does not answer our prayers when we pray to him because He does not give to us what we ask. The fact is this. God did answer your prayer, you just missed the answer. God said, "No." When God says no, that is an answer to prayer (see 1 Kings 19:4). Elijah prayed that he would die, but his foolish request was denied.

K. How Often Do You Pray?

The Bible tells you that your whole life needs to be soaked in the ministry of prayer. The important thing is that you start to pray and do it frequently. The Bible teaches that you must "continue in prayer" (Colossians 4:2) and "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). The idea behind the frequency of prayer is to keep the receiver off of the hook! You should always be ready to go to God in prayer and worship Him. You should be ready to go to prayer when you are tempted to sin and when you think of people who are in need. You should automatically pray to the Lord throughout the day continuing your spirit of worship before the Lord and your dependency upon Him for the situations and decisions you make in life.

L. Should You Ever Fast and Pray?

The Bible does talk about believers in the early church fasting in connection with prayer. It was an accepted practice during the early church. Therefore, we cannot assume that fasting is a wrong practice for the church today. The way of prayer has not changed down through the centuries of the church life. Fasting was a practice that was never commanded for church life. However, we do see believers fasting during the early days of the church. Fasting is when a person abstains from eating for a specified amount of time in order to demonstrate his earnestness and desire for God to hear and answer his prayers. True fasting was a not a form of asceticism (see

Colossians 2:20-21). It was merely a way to periodically demonstrate a believer's desire and earnestness in his prayer life.

Fasting is a spiritual exercise connected to prayer that truly demonstrates a Christian's humility, desire, and believing heart before God. Fasting is connected with the earnest prayers of a humble believer who asks God for wisdom, direction, blessing or help in some area of his life. It is also connected with repentance and the desire to change one's life around for the glory of God.

The Bible tells us that fasting was part of the Jewish practice connected with the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27,29). Fasting was a necessary mandate of the Old Testament Law that God gave to the Jews. They were required to fast. However, God never did authoritatively require the New Testament church to fast. There is no command given to the church in the new dispensation to fast. Therefore, it is not a requirement given to the New Testament church. Fasting in this dispensation is always to be done voluntarily and without any obligation attached to it. God does not command us to fast, but He does commend the practice of fasting.

Whenever fasting is commanded, then it becomes a wrong practice, since God's Word never commands the church to fast. This is a practice that is not enjoined upon the church. A person should never command another person to fast. This is not biblical and can lead to fasting with a wrong intent or motive. However, when God's people willingly decide to fast, then they are to remember to not fast like the Pharisees of the day of Jesus (see Matt. 6:16-18). These hypocrites or play actors wanted to impress people with their time of fasting. Whenever fasting is done in order to impress others or make yourself appear more spiritual than others, then it is wrong.

Fasting is a spiritual exercise between God and individuals. It does not have anything to do with approving yourself before others or before God. Nor is fasting to be done in a mechanical or legalistic manner like the Roman Catholic fast during the 40 days of Lent. Lent was adopted by Romanism back in 525. They borrowed the ritual from the ancient Babylonian ceremony of fasting, which was held in honor of the miraculously conceived child Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14). Actually, Lent is not a true fast because people still eat food during

these days. They simply decide to not eat certain meats on Friday or refuse to eat certain other foods throughout the weekday Lent season consisting of 40 days. The season of Lent acts as a kind of saving reformation process for many people. Some people attempt to abstain from smoking cigarettes for a period of time or drinking alcohol in order to have God be pleased with them. They abstain from eating eggs, cheese, chocolate bars or meats on certain days in order to gain favor with God. These types of actions are not Biblical fasting and they are not pleasing to God. They are simply pagan legalistic acts, which are intended to have God focus on certain people doing some meritorious action instead of the people really focusing on God.

Real Biblical fasting was always intended to convey a message to God. It was directed to God and was for God. It was not intended for man to get God to look down at his life and give him some kind of spiritual report card. The message of fasting was that God would hear the prayer of a believer and intervene and help the believer. For many people today, Lent is merely a way to get God to look down at them and grant them acceptance into Heaven because of their willingness to sacrifice some trivial item in their lives.

Most religious denominations practice fasting in order to teach the people to reform their lives in some manner so that God will accept them. This has been a teaching down through the history of the church and has brought people under the old works routine for salvation (1Timothy 4:3-4). There is a great difference between Biblical fasting and legalistic or salvational requirements in Lent. For many people, fasting is intended to bring a person salvation or acceptance before God. This action of fasting for salvation is condemned in the Scripture (Lk. 18:9-14).

The sacrifice of Lent is simply a man-centered non-biblical abstinence that has man at the forefront. The Biblical fast is a true fast that centers upon a person's desire to see God work in his life in a certain manner or answer prayer. Many people think that Lent is a spiritual act that pleases God and brings God's approval upon their life. This is simply not true. Fasting is not to be turned into some type of religious ritual (Lk. 18:12). Fasting is also unacceptable and not effective without a right relationship with God (Is. 58:3-9; Zech. 7:5-6). Many

people want to live it up with the Mardi Gras lifestyle and then attempt to reform themselves afterward so God will be pleased with them. This kind of action demonstrates that people do not have a right relationship with God.

You must also remember that Biblical fasting was never given in order to promote well being or physical health. The Bible never speaks of fasting in this context. This does not mean that it is wrong to fast or abstain from food in order to cleanse your system or for other health reasons. As mentioned before, fasting is not to be an ascetic practice (Col. 2:20-23). The ascetic punishes himself in a vain attempt to know God, to find favor with God, or to attain spiritual power. The Christian has all of this freely in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:6,7,10).

Millions of people abstain from eating certain meat because they were taught to do so. This is a mechanical type of false fast and is not the way God ever intended people to fast. The wrong way to pray and fast is to do it mechanically and then call attention to the fact that you are doing it. This is what the Pharisees did. However, we are told to really do our fasting in secret, without any outside obligation or mechanical requirements (Matt. 6:17-18). You will notice that fasting was to be done in secret where the Father will see it but not other people. We are not to make our fasting known to others. God is the one that we are praying to and fasting to and not the whole world.

Nonetheless, fasting was practiced in connection with prayer as is seen in Matthew 6:5-15. After Jesus spoke about prayer, he then spoke about fasting since this act was connected with prayer. Prayer and fasting are connected. There may be times within your life that you become deeply burdened about some matter and want to give yourself to prayer and fasting for a certain length of time. Sometimes, when you are deeply burdened you do not even feel like eating. It's in these times that you may want to simply fast and bring your burden to the Lord in prayer. There are times when it is appropriate for believers to fast.

There may be times when you may want to draw near to God in prayer and refrain from eating for a length of time in order to express your earnestness and desire to seek God's wisdom about a certain

situation or God's answer for some important decision in life (see Ezra 8:21-23). Fasting shows one's humbleness and spiritual dependence upon God! The hand of the Lord is with us as we seek to do what is right (vs. 23). We need to teach our children this within our instant society. You need to learn that you are dependent upon God in life. Here we find Ezra fasting and praying as they embark on the return to the land. He prayed and fasted that God would give both them and their children safety along the way. He also prayed that their possessions would not be lost along the way. He prayed that the people would move or travel in a right direction. So we can fast and pray that we too might make right decisions and move in a right direction as we make certain changes in our lives and embark on a new journey.

As we pray and fast, we must still always remember that just because we fast does not mean that we will receive answer to our request in the way that we asked for it (2 Samuel 12:21-23). Fasting does not necessarily guarantee that one's prayers will be answered in the way that he asked for it to be answered. God may still say "no" or answer in a different way altogether. As noble as our fast may be, we may not receive for what we asked.

Paul spoke about fasting and how a married couple may want to refrain from physical relations with each other as they express their request and prayerful desire to God (see 1 Cor. 7:5). Of course, this is always to be done with agreement and understanding.

When the early church leaders (prophets & teachers) sent Paul and Barnabas out on their first missionary journey, they found it profitable to fast and pray about the matter before sending them away (see Acts 13:2-3). They spent time in prayer and fasting over this important spiritual matter. They wanted God to give them great wisdom and show them the right course of action to take. Their desire to seek God's wisdom and direction was indicated by their fast.

Paul and Barnabas also prayed and fasted when ordaining elders in the cities where they were building God's work (see Acts 14:23). Their prayer and fasting was connected with their prayerful desire to see God's church grow within these localities and see these new ordained pastors preach the word faithfully and without reservation.

We can fast when new ministries are launched. Jesus fasted while He was here on earth as He contemplated His future temptation by the devil (see Matt. 4:1-2. Luke 4:1-2). Jesus knew that He needed to pray and fast about His coming temptation with the devil. By doing this, Jesus was acknowledging His dependency upon the Father and was humbling Himself before the Father for strength and victory.

Jesus was not only the Son of God but He also was the Son of man who was tempted in all areas as we are tempted today. Therefore, Jesus did not use His powers as the member of the Godhead to create food or do great supernatural acts in order to comply with the devil's plan or agenda. It may be fitting at times to fast and pray when we are going through strong satanic temptation in our lives or feel like we need extra assistance to overcome Satan or break down demonic strongholds (see Matt. 17:21). Fasting does not produce victory but it demonstrates to God a sincere, humble and dependent heart.

Paul the apostle practiced fasting in connection with his journeys in life (see 2 Cor. 11:27; 6:4-5). He saw the need to pray and fast as he encountered great difficulties and problems in life. Fasting was a way to demonstrate his utter dependency upon God for help and divine strength as he faced tremendous challenges.

Nehemiah prayed and fasted in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the sins that caused God's judgment to come upon His covenant people (Nehemiah 1:4). His fast demonstrated his confidence or faith that God would keep His covenant with the people and bring them back into the land of blessing and fruitfulness (4:5-11).

The psalmist David fasted and prayed in connection with the health of other people (Psalm 35:13). He prayed for the healing and betterment of people while fasting. Notice that humbleness is connected with true fasting. This is why the person who genuinely fasts will not brag about it to others.

Fasting was also used in connection with the prayerful confession and mourning over sin (1 Samuel 7:6; Neh. 9:1-3; Ezra 10:6). Fasting

and mournful confession and repentance of sin was always connected together in the Old Testament. Sometimes you may want to fast in order to simply show God your deep heartfelt desire of repentance. You may want to fast to demonstrate your true sincerity to follow God and do what is right.

The length of time involved in fasting always varied. Some fasting was only part of a day (Dan. 6:18). Other fasting was for one day (Lev. 23:27; 1 Sam. 7:6; 14:24; Jer. 36:6; Neh. 9:1). Some fasting lasted three days (1 Sam. 30:12; Matt. 15:32; Acts 9:9). Other fasts included seven days, fourteen days, three weeks and forty days (see 1 Sam. 31:11-13; Acts 27:33; Dan. 10:2-3; Exodus 34:28; Matt. 4:1-2).

Always remember that fasting is not commanded in the New Testament church dispensation. The church was never called on by God to corporately fast. You do not have to fast in order to be spiritual. Fasting is not a sign of spirituality. Fasting is not one of the fruits of the Spirit. God does not love us any more or think any more of us if we choose to fast. Likewise, He does not think any less of us if we do not fast (see 1 Cor. 8:8). Fasting is less important than simply doing God's will and walking with the Lord (Micah 6:8). Fasting is not an end in itself, it simply is one way or means by which we can worship God (John 4:24). We are to worship God through our spirit and not by our soulish desires that come from the old nature. Many times fasting simply becomes an outward show and a way to obtain some kind of selfish experience or pleasure. We must distinguish the spiritual from the soulish in our time of fasting and praying.

Furthermore, when we make fasting become a ritual without reason and feel that it is becoming a weight to our lives, then we are beginning to become under bondage to the practice of the fast. This is definitely wrong (Galatians 5:1). Whenever we engage in some form of discipline that crunches our lives and robs us of our freedom to serve and live for Christ without bondage to legalistic rules, then something is wrong. Any discipline that we have in our Christian life is to produce greater freedom for us to live holy and separated lives for Christ, without any set pattern of rules and regulations that become weighty and lay heavy upon our lives. Discipline is one thing; bondage to rules is quite another thing.

Fasting is important and useful in Christian life and service, but it is not something by which we are to judge the spiritual condition of others. Whenever you fast in order to try and become more spiritual, you are fasting for the wrong reason. Whenever you fast in order to place yourself on a higher spiritual plane than someone else, then you are defeating the purpose of fasting. Whenever you demand that other people fast along with you, then you are overstepping your boundary. God has not given you permission to demand another person to fast with you in this dispensation. However, we find the early church practicing fasting as a sign of humility and demonstrating their dependency upon God for wisdom, help and assistance.

One of the greatest spiritual benefits of fasting is learning to become more attentive to God and more aware of our own inadequacy and God's sufficiency to meet our needs. Fasting actually is to get our mind off of self and place it on God and what His will and way is for our life. In this way we can fast today and do it personally without enjoining it upon the rest of the church. The church was never authoritatively ordered to fast. Fasting is a personal matter. God does not COMMAND fasting; He COMMENDS it.

M. Your Model Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15)

Two men were talking together. The first challenged the other, "If you are so religious, let's hear you quote the Lord's Prayer. I bet you \$10.00 you can't." The second responded, "Now I lay my head down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." The first pulled out his wallet and fished out a ten-dollar bill, muttering, "I didn't think you could do it!"

Neither man knew what the Lord's Prayer really was! Sadly, many people take prayer as lightly as these men did. But prayer is not a cute poem or a saying for children to recite. It is communication with the God of the Universe.

Jesus taught His earthly disciples or followers to pray in their Christian life. In fact, they asked the Lord Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). You are in the same shoes that the disciples of Jesus were in. You must learn how to pray in your new Christian life and begin to open up a whole new world and relationship with God. If

you are ever going to learn to be the kind of disciple that God wants you to be then you will have to learn how to pray.

Jesus taught His disciples or followers how to pray by giving them a model of prayer (Matthew 6:9-15). This is not the Lord's prayer! It is the disciple's prayer! We know this is not the Lord's prayer because of what Jesus said in verse 12, "Forgive us our debts (sins)." If this was the Lord's Prayer then Jesus was confessing that He was sinful. This would be an outrage and attack upon the person of Christ who is God (1 John 3:5, Heb. 7:26).

In addition, Jesus did not say, "Recite this prayer verbatim," but "After this manner pray ye." This prayer is not to be repeated or recited over and over again like some kind of repetitive and ritualistic type of prayer. This is not the reason why Jesus gave this prayer. In fact, Jesus warned against meaningless and heartless prayers that are recited over and over again (vs. 7). When you pray or talk to God, you are not to pray like a computer that is spitting out all kinds of information. This becomes the peril of all prayer. You are not to pray meaningless repetitive words that are not from the heart. Your praying is to be simple and directed to God without any strict or rigid form to follow.

Dr. Robert A. Cook has often remarked:

"All of us have one routine prayer in our system; and once we get rid of it, then we can really start to pray."

In this section on prayer, Jesus simply wants to teach all His disciples the important ingredients of the prayer life. When Jesus says, "After this manner (fashion) therefore pray ye," He is not stressing that you must follow the exact words of this prayer when you pray. Rather, Jesus is stressing that you must follow the pattern that is established or developed in this prayer and incorporate it into your prayers. Jesus is not talking about a strict form to follow when you pray. He is talking about a certain pattern that you need to develop in all your prayers by incorporating certain important ingredients into your own prayer life.

In order to speak about the important aspects or ingredients of your prayer life, Jesus gives a model type of prayer to follow but not to repeat. When you pray in your Christian life you will learn to put these

ingredients into your prayers on a continual basis. In other words, you will learn to highlight these special ingredients within your new prayer life.

There are six ingredients about prayer, demonstrated in this model prayer, which you can learn to use in your own time of prayer.

a. You should pray for God's holiness (Matthew 6:9).

The term "Hallowed" when used in reference with the Father's name actually points to the holiness of God, which is represented by His name ("Hallowed {holy} be thy name"). A name stands for the character and reputation of a person. This is not suggesting that we must repeat these actual words every time we pray ("Hallowed be thy name"). Rather, it is pointing to God's character as a holy God for which His name represents and stands for. The real understanding of what Jesus is saying is this. God the Father is perfect in His holy character and being; therefore, you must learn to hallow or reverence the name of God during your prayer life. This means that when you pray you should pray in a reverent and respectful way due to God's holiness and purity of character. You should *pray in a manner that is becoming or fitting to His holiness*.

God the Father is a holy God that demands our reverence and respect. You cannot just barge into the presence of a holy God in an unruly and disrespectful way. As you pray, you should pray reverencing God for His holiness and what He has done for your life. As you pray, you need not follow any strict repetitive prayers, but you do need to pray reverently. You are addressing the holy God of the entire universe! You must learn to pray in the presence of a holy God.

Thomas Adams has said:

"Holiness is that perspective through which we must see God."

You should never address God in a lighthearted and flippant way showing disrespect for His holiness and majesty. You must learn to pray in a manner that shows respect for God's holiness and not pray in a fashion that is disrespectful.

This means that you will not pray to God in a way that seems disrespectful, such as incorporating humor and giggling into your prayers, trying to impress other people by your prayers or asking for things that are unholy and which offend His holiness. It also means that you will pray in a humble fashion before the holy God and never demand anything from Him. It also means that you will pray with sincerity and meaning in your time of prayer. A hallowed or holy God wants prayer that is from the heart; prayer which is sincere and meaningful (John 4:24). Many prayers today are like dead language, which are only fit for the prayer graveyard or cemetery. You are not to sound like a walking ghost in your prayer life. God hates all prayers and worship that lack vitality and are phony.

Also, in order to pray reverently before God and respect His holy character, you must never pray with sin in your life expecting God to hear your prayers and bless your life. God does not hear the prayers of His children who have sin in their lives which they are unwilling to deal with (Isaiah 1: 4,16; 59:1-2; Psalms 66:18). God is not losing His hearing when you pray. He simply refuses to hear you when you have unconfessed sin in your life. Those sins that you refuse to deal with cut off the lifeline of prayer. When you raise a barrier between you and God's holiness, then you must confess your sin and find His forgiveness in the realm of the Christian life (1 John 1:9). When you try to pray to God without confessing your sins, you profane His holy or hallowed name and show disrespect to His holy character.

G. Campbell Morgan said:

"It is more tragic when men and women go to God's house of worship and recite and sing God's hallowed name with the lips, while the heart is not clean."

When you fail to pray and worship God with an open and sincere heart, free from sin, hypocrisy, then you are not approaching a holy God with respect and reverence which is due His name or holy character. Lack of reverence before God's holiness is the greatest crime of the Christian life! God's name must be hallowed today or shown great respect and reverence for His character of holiness.

Wherever you are when you pray, you need to remember to show reverence and respect for God's name or His holy character. This is

why we see the posture of prayer, as seen in the Bible, emphasizing the bowing of the head (Genesis 24:26; Ex. 4:31; 12:27; 2 Chronicles 29:30). Of course, bowing your head and shutting your eyes has a practical purpose. It helps shut out all distractions that might prevent you from concentrating on the Lord. This posture and act suggests reverence and respect. This is why we bow our heads today. It shows respect for the holy character of God's presence. Subjects bow to their sovereigns, so we should show respect and bow our heads to our Master who is God. Although the posture of prayer may not always include the bowing the head, you should practice this posture on a regular basis.

There are times you do not want to bow your head when you decide to pray, especially when you are driving down the freeway! However, learning to express reverence to the Holy God in your prayer time is a must. We can express reverence to Him by what we say and talk about in our prayers, what we don't ask for in our prayers (unholy things), how we approach God (with a clean heart) and how we humbly present our requests before His presence. Even the outward removing of your hat is a sign of showing respect for God's holiness when we pray and worship God. As you worship God thorough prayer, you should remove your hat and show reverence for the God who is perfect in His holiness ("Hallowed be thy name"). God is holy!

b. You should pray for God's will (Matthew 6:10).

In the day that Jesus was upon the earth He was seeking to establish His earthly kingdom. Since God's people in that day (Israel) rejected Him as their Messiah, Jesus is no longer trying to establish His kingdom on earth. This means that you should not pray that God's kingdom would literally arrive on the earth at this point in time. Part of God's will during the days of the disciples was that they should pray for the arrival of Christ's earthly kingdom. This is not a valid prayer to pray today in light of the new dispensation in which we live. Therefore, we should not pray that the kingdom would be established on earth today. God's will right now is different then it was during the days when He was on earth offering His kingdom to Israel. The next event on God's calendar is the rapture of the church. After this will follow the tribulation period of seven years and then the kingdom will

come. To pray that the kingdom would arrive today is not in sync with God's program and planned will for the new dispensation.

However, the principle behind this model prayer is that we are to pray according to God's will. In Jesus' day, God's will was for the kingdom to arrive on earth. The believer today must simply pray that God's present will be done in the earth. As we look at the Scripture we will see that the end of this age will increase with apostasy and wax worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13). Also, God's will for your life today includes many other areas beside the kingdom. God's general will for your life is spoken about in the Bible. God's specific will for your life is demonstrated in the happenings and circumstances that surround your life.

Your prayers should always be centered around the desire to do God's will for your life. When you pray, you should always pray that God's will might be accomplished in your life and in every situation that you face. "Lord, help me to do your will today and to follow your will as it is outlined in the Bible. Lord, help me to accept Your will for my life, even when it is trying and hard to bear." God's will should always be a focal point in your time of prayer. In one sense, you are praying that God's rule would be established not upon the earth specifically but in your own life as you seek to live for God. You are to be subject to God's rule and will over your life.

Robert law has said:

"Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in Heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth."

We have no right to ask God or demand God to give us anything that is contrary to his will for our life. Remember that you are always to ask God to grant your requests in accordance with His program and rule within your own life. This is what Jesus did when He prayed while living upon earth (see Matthew 26:39; Hebrews 10:7,9). Jesus always prayed and lived in submission to God's will. This is what others prayed when they prayed about their healing (Matthew 8:2). This is what spiritual people will pray as they continue to grow in their life of prayer (see Psalms 40:8; Romans 1:10; Colossians 4:12; James 4:13-15).

You should always center your praying on what God wants for your life and not what you necessarily think is best for your life. You must allow God to have His rule and reign within your life right now! When you are not sure if it's God's will to grant you something, always pray that God's will might be done. For instance, you can always pray that people will be saved and that you would be delivered from sinful habits. These are all prayers that are in accordance with God's will (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 10:1; Ephesians 6:18). However, many times we pray and are not sure what God's will might be in a given situation. In these times we must always pray that God's will would be done. For instance, it's not always God's will to heal you of every disease and sickness in life (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Many times God does intervene and bless our lives physically; however, you cannot assume that God will heal you of every illness. It's not always God's will to give you an easy path or road to follow (1 Peter 4:19). Neither is it always God's will to give you everything that you ask for in life (1 Kings 19:4). God is not like a living MasterCard in the sky that gives you everything that you ask for and want in life.

Praying for God's will to be done in your life is an important ingredient in all of your prayers. Let God know that you want to get His will done in your own life and not your own will done. You must learn to surrender to God's will in your time of praying. Without doing this, it is really senseless to even pray.

c. You should pray for God's provision (Matthew 6:11).

"Give us this day our daily bread." You may have a freezer full of food and a supermarket right down the road from where you live. You may have a good paying job. None the less, you are to pray that God would provide our needs. Why is this? It's because you are to petition God knowing that He is your constant source of supply. You are to have a "daily" dependency upon God to meet all of your needs, especially the most common need of all, which is for food. We are to pray realizing that all of our food is a gift from the hand of God and that ultimately we must dependent upon God to meet our need. In the back of my life and behind the bread or food that is on my table is The Father. He has bountifully provided it for me. So we are to thank Him daily and continue to depend upon Him for all of our needs. This

of course does not mean that we sit down, fold our hands and wait for God to spoon-feed us (Genesis 3:19). It means that as we go about our daily work duty in life that the Father will meet my most common need and sustain me. God is our unseen provider (Phil. 4:19). We must depend upon Him for His blessing and provision.

d. You should pray for God's forgiveness (Matthew 6:12).

Praying for forgiveness is a vital need for your Christian life ("forgive our debts"). When you become dirty with sin, then you must pray that God would forgive you and cleanse your life so that we can fellowship with the Father once again (1 John 1:9). The word "debts" speaks of our moral and spiritual debt of sin that we owe to God. In other words, when we sin, we must ask forgiveness knowing that we have a sinful debt before God that must be made right (see Luke 11:4). This sinful debt effects our relationship of communion before God the Father. We cannot fellowship with Him in communion. Every time we sin, we break fellowship with God. Therefore, we are obligated to take care of this debt before God by confessing to Him. You need the daily cleansing within your life.

Verse 12 goes on to say, "as we forgive others." This does not mean that you earn forgiveness by forgiving others. It's not a merit system where you are forgiven if you forgive someone else. Rather, the point Jesus is making is that you have no right to expect God to forgive your debts of sin before Him within your Christian life, unless you are willing to forgive the debt of sin that some person has accumulated against your own life. Maybe some person has wronged you in some way. Is it right for you to go to God and ask His forgiveness for a sinful debt that you have before Him and at the same time not forgive some person of a sinful debt that they have against you? The answer to this question is very clear (see 6:14-15). One condition for daily forgiveness in the Christian life is a forgiving spirit toward other people. You must have a forgiving heart (Mark 11:25).

e. You should pray for God's protection (Matthew 6:13).

The idea of praying that the Father would not "lead us into temptation" has been misunderstood. God does not tempt us with evil or sin (James 1:13). What Jesus is saying to His disciples is that they

should pray that the Father would not permit them to enter the time of temptation off guard and be overcome by the devil. In essence, Jesus is saying that the disciples should pray, “Don’t allow us to be directed into the time of temptation off guard, so that we are overcome by the evil or sin that Satan is tempting us with. Rather, help us to remain spiritual alert so we can face temptation victoriously and be delivered from the evil or sin of Satan’s temptation.”

Jesus is saying that the disciples should pray for victory over evil within the time of temptation. It’s understood that they would face temptation throughout their entire lives. This then is primarily a prayer of protection and victory in the time of temptation from Satan. You can pray that God might deliver you from the power of Satan’s temptations as you face them in life (“deliver us from evil”). You can pray that you would never be caught off guard with temptation and be overcome by evil or sin as you enter the “evil day” (Eph. 6:13). You can pray that the Father might never allow you to enter the time of temptation in an unexpected time when you are not spiritually alert and ready for it (see Matt. 26:41).

This verse is expressing a similar idea. We are to stay spiritually alert (“watch”) and pray so that we do not “enter” the time of temptation off guard and in a weakened position. When we do, then we are looking for defeat instead of victory. We are to stay spiritually alert and keep praying, so that when the time of temptation comes, we might not enter the period of temptation in a state of weakness and unexpectancy.

f. You should pray for God’s glory (Matthew 6:13b).

Whenever you pray, you should pray that God would be glorified. In the coming future day when Christ decides to return to earth according to His own plan and program, then the Millennial Kingdom will come and Christ will rule the world with power and be glorified throughout all the earth. The disciples are praying in their own day about this coming kingdom and glory. Today, we cannot pray for Christ’s coming kingdom and earthly glory because God has changed His program. It is not the next event on God’s program. Nevertheless, today we can pray that God might be glorified in all that we ask for and all that we do. We can pray that God’s name would be honored

as He answers our prayers. We can pray that God would get all the glory as He provides our daily needs and gives us victory in the time of temptation.

In one region of Africa, the first converts to Christianity were very diligent about praying. In fact, the believers each had their own special place outside the village where they went to pray in solitude. The villagers reached these “prayer rooms” by using their own private footpaths through the brush. When grass began to grow over one of these trails, it was evident that the person to whom it belonged was not praying very much. Because these new Christians were concerned for each other’s spiritual welfare, a unique custom sprang up. When ever anyone noticed an overgrown “Prayer path,” he or she would go to the person and lovingly warn, “Friend, there’s grass on your path!”

Dear Christian friend, has there been grass on your path? If so, you need to change your life by prayer. You need to take the initiative to begin worshipping God through prayer and understanding the vital need and importance of prayer in your own personal life. Prayer is your spiritual lifeline with God and to God. Furthermore, your *spiritual temperature* is measured by your prayer life. It’s the author’s desire that these lessons might help you develop a deeper, more worshipful, meaningful, and committed prayer life. It’s my desire that that you might become more dependent upon God and grow closer to Him through your increased emphasis on prayer.