

"Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Luke 11:1

The disciples of Jesus asked him to teach them to pray the same way John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray which means there's something about prayer that can be learned. Prayer is an important channel for connecting to divinity which is why the Bible places so much emphasis on it. Jesus Himself said we always ought to pray and not faint. Which means that if we are not praying we are fainting and prayer is like oxygen for a believer.

Since prayer is so vital, we're trusting that the Holy Spirit will use this to teach us how to pray. What are the elements and principles of prayer? What are the lessons we can learn from the prayer life of Jesus and other key examples in the Bible?

We trust that as we go through the series the Holy Spirit will ignite in us a hunger for prayer and equip us with the capacity to pray.

Coming by the blood

"So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven..." Luke 11:2

Humans are here on earth, and God is in heaven. Prayer is the channel that connects the physical with the spiritual. Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God they were in constant communion with God in the garden of Eden. However when they fell that communion was broken (Gen 3) so one of the objectives of the earthly ministry of Jesus was to reconcile man back to God. A critical part of this reconciliation is atonement for sin. God is holy and cannot tolerate sin (Hab 1:13). For us as sinful people to approach a holy God, He devised a system in the Old Testament where priests would go once a year to the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of Israel. However through the blood of Jesus we're no longer limited by time or place.

"who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness..." I Peter 2:24

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus." Hebrews 10:19

By bearing our sins on Himself on the cross, Jesus substituted Himself for us and paid the price for our sins. This means that everyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and saviour was bought with the price of His blood. When we come to God by the blood of Jesus, God doesn't see our sin, what he sees is the blood of Jesus. It's this blood that makes atonement for our sins and gives us access to the very presence of God.

What has this got to do with prayer? Because of the blood we know we have access to His presence and can commune with Him knowing that He will hear and answer us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus thank You for Your blood that gives me constant access to the presence of God.

Thanksgiving

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name." Psalms 100:4

Many times prayers start with requests for what we want God to do for us, which is fine, but the Bible gives us insight that rather than start with a request we should begin with thanksgiving for what He's already done. Thanksgiving does two things for us. First we are reminded of God's faithfulness in past which in turn builds up our faith for the future.

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night," Psalms 92:1-2

The enemy excels at reminding us about what God is yet to do and the imperfections in our lives. But when we take the time to thank God, it forces us to reflect on where we were compared to where we are now and how far God has brought us. And it's not just the seemingly "big" things we give thanks for. God is involved in every detail from when we wake up, going through the day til when we go back to bed. As we thank Him, we become more conscious of His constant presence with us which opens our heart up to Him.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

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

It's great and powerful to thank God for what He's done, but we can go to another dimension of thanking Him in advance for what He's going to do. When we thank in advance we're saying in essence, "Lord, I trust You and know that You have answered my prayer in the best way possible according to Your will". This helps us build our faith as we learn to trust Him for who He is and what He's capable of, not just what He's done for us in the past. As our faith gets stronger, we draw even closer to Him.

Prayer: Lord I thank You for the gift of life and the grace to see today. I thank You for ordering my steps through this day and perfecting all that concerns me. Thank You in advance for Your answer concerning I trust You and know that You've answered according to Your will.

Praying through God's word

'Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.' Matthew 6:10

One of the most important things we must know about God is that He is committed to the integrity of His word. This means He will back up whatever He has said in the Bible. Knowing this can dramatically alter the way we pray because it means that when we want to take a matter to God, the first thing we must do is find out what the Bible says about it.

' "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.' Matthew 6:7

'...For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.' Psalms 138:2

Answers to our prayers are not determined by how emotional or vocal we are as we pray but if what we're praying about aligns with God's will and His word. It's through His word that we know His will and that's what we bring back to Him in prayer. As we go through His word, we receive insight into the mind of God concerning many areas and God takes us further by giving us a specific word for the area we need to address.

'But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Matthew 4:4

When we read the Bible, we are engaging with the written word which is powerful. But there's an even deeper dimension where a scripture seems to 'jump' out at us. This is what is known as Rhema meaning the revealed word of God. We may read the same scripture over and over but there may come a time when it speaks directly to what we're going through. This is the Holy Spirit's way of telling us to bring that scripture back to Him in prayer and to keep doing so until we see its manifestation in our lives.

Prayer: Holy Spirit speak to me as I spend time in the word of God today. Give me the specific word I need to bring back prayer because I know the Lord will back up His word.

Praying The Name of Jesus

"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth," Philippians 2:10

In giving us access to His name, Jesus gave us a blank cheque to address any situation we could ever encounter. But the value we place on this access is limited to our revelation of the power in His name.

"as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue," 2 Peter 1:3

"In Jesus name" isn't just a way to start or round up prayer. When we pray in His name we appropriate by faith all His name has achieved and apply it to the prayer. The faith we apply to His name depends on our revelation of who Jesus is. The Bible tells us that the weight and authority the name of Jesus carries is so vast that it transcends both the physical and spiritual worlds such that every entity recognises and responds to His name.

"And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you." Exodus 3:14

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;" Colossians 2:9

God has many dimensions which are revealed in His names, which is why when Moses asked the Lord how to describe Him to the Israelites, He summed it up in "I Am". The Bible tells us that Jesus fully represents every dimension of God. Which means when we pray in the name of Jesus, the dimension of God required immediately goes into operation be it healer, provider, comforter, deliverer, etc. This is explains why nothing happens when the name of Jesus is written or called carelessly or without revelation compared to the power that comes forth when there's revelation.

Prayer: Lord grant me a personal revelation of the name of Jesus. Help me to understand how to fully appropriate all that is in His name and how to give Him the reverence He deserves

Persistent Prayer

"The moment you began praying, a command was given..." Daniel 9:23

Not every prayer will see the answer manifested immediately. There are times when we have to pray and pray and pray until we see what we are praying about. This doesn't signal a lack of faith and there's no spiritual law that says we only have to pray once for prayer to be answered. Rather the Bible tells us that there is a place for persistence in the place of prayer.

"...Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way..." Daniel 10:12-13

As soon as Daniel started to pray the Lord heard his prayer and answered him. However, the answer was delayed in the spirit world by the kingdom of darkness for 21 days and it took intervention from Archangel Michael, for the answer to be released to Daniel. God hears and answers prayers, but like Daniel it is possible that there are times when our answer is being delayed for a number of reasons. It could be as a result of the activities of the kingdom of darkness as with Daniel. It could also be that there is a version of us that must emerge to be able to fully appropriate the answer to what we are praying for. Whatever it may be, there is a place for persistence in the place of prayer.

"Give the Lord no rest until he completes his work, until he makes Jerusalem the pride of the earth." Isaiah 62:7

When Daniel began to pray, he did not know the answer was going to take 21 days to arrive. He was just going to keep praying until he received an answer. There is a prayer of "until", meaning we don't stop praying until we see what we're praying for. There are no timelines to such prayers, we continue until we get an answer, with faith that we will see what we are praying for.

Prayer: Lord I ask for the grace to stay in the place of prayer until I see what i'm praying for. Grant me the grace not to be discouraged or weary but to stay full of faith until I receive the manifestation.

Prayer of Agreement

"I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you." Matthew 18:19

There is power in unity. The Lord didn't design us to function alone in any area and that includes prayer. To add to this He has practically given us a blank cheque when it comes to praying in agreement with someone. Which means that if two people genuinely agree concerning a matter heaven will respond to them.

"Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?" Amos 3:3

God deals with the intents of our hearts not our words. For this type of prayer to be effective the first thing that must be established is that there is truly agreement from the heart, not just vocally. Before choosing a partner to agree with in prayer, the first step is to ask the Lord to reveal the person's heart to you. It may be that the person(s) may not really have faith for the area being prayed for. And what that means is that while you may physically have two or more people praying, in the spiritual realm it's only one voice that's resonating.

"The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"" Mark 9:24

Prayer starts from the heart not the mouth. If it so happens that we know in our heart that our faith is shaky concerning the area of prayer it's important to acknowledge this and ask God to help our faith before joining the other person/people to pray concerning the matter. And if someone lets us know they're not able to agree in prayer for whatever reason, we shouldn't be offended but ask the Lord to help the person grow in faith as He reveals to us who should partner with us on the prayer journey.

The prayer of agreement must also be about a specific request such as healing, conversion, success in a particular area, etc so it'll be clear when God answers it.

Prayer: Lord grant me the sensitivity to identify the person(s) to connect with for prayer of agreement. Help my prayer partner(s) and I grow in faith so that as we pray together in genuine agreement nothing shall be impossible for us.

Pray Without Ceasing

"Never stop praying." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Prayer is to the spirit what oxygen is to the body - without it death is certain. While it's obvious to the physical body when there isn't sufficient oxygen, it's not always so apparent in the spirit. Picture a mobile phone being connected to a power point to charge. Once the device is disconnected there's still residual power in the battery to keep the phone going for some time. But constant usage will drain the battery to the point where apps on the phone start shutting down because the battery power can't carry them. It'll eventually get to the point where the phone battery will die and the phone can't be used.

Prayer is our connection to spiritual power. If we don't pray we are drawing on our spiritual "reserves" and it'll get to the point that we become dry. Praying often is like charging your phone often so that it's always functioning optimally and can run many apps at the same time. Otherwise the danger is that there's no reserve of spiritual energy to draw from when circumstances of life make a demand on us.

"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." Psalms 91:1

"But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Luke 5:16 How do we pray ceaselessly? Smith Wigglesworth is quoted as saying he didn't often spend more than half an hour in prayer at one time, but he never went more than half an hour without praying. The principle he was demonstrating was how to practically be a dweller in the secret place and how to stay in the place of prayer. Prayer is about connecting to the Holy Spirit and not necessarily about extended hours or eloquence. It's us letting Him know not just during our quiet time but also through the day that we need Him and are dependent on His help and guidance. So as we go through our day today, let's be intentional about taking a few "prayer breaks" in the day just to thank Him, ask Him for help or just acknowledge His presence.

Prayer: Precious Holy Spirit please help me live conscious of Your presence and be intentional about staying connected to You throughout my day. Help me become a secret place person.

Corporate prayer

"How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold them, And the Lord had surrendered them?" Deuteronomy 32:30

There is power in corporate prayer. In God's system the results from adding people to a circumstance is never linear. The Bible tells us that the spiritual impact of one person in prayer is likened to chasing a thousand and that of two people is ten thousand. This means that when the body of Christ gathers in unity in prayer, our results should be astounding.

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Matt 18:20

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2:1

When believers gather in unity in the name of Jesus amazing things happen. The Bible has several examples of God moving mightily in response to corporate prayers. This doesn't mean He doesn't answer our individual prayers, but He assures us of exponential results when we gather as a community.

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matt 18:18

When believers whose lives are in alignment with God come together in unity to exercise the authority that Christ has given us, we have the power to engage the spiritual realm to make the seemingly impossible possible. Not because of our power but because of the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. Imagine a laser beam focusing on one point on a sheet of paper versus say a hundred beams focusing on the same point. The paper would have burnt eventually with the single beam. But when the strength is multiplied the results are faster. This is one of the reasons the enemy fights unity in the body of Christ because he understands how powerful the body is when we stand in unison.

Prayer: Lord I ask that You keep me rooted and grounded in Your love and in alignment with You so that any prayer I am part of will result in an increase in the demonstration of Your power. Lord tie my prayer community with bonds of love so that the prayers we bring to You are always in one accord

Prayer As A Lifestyle

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Mark 1:35

Prayer is not a luxury to be sacrificed when time is limited, but rather a necessity for navigating the challenges and responsibilities of a busy life. Jesus made prayer a priority in spite of His busy schedule because He knew He needed it to navigate the day successfully. Sometimes we think we're too busy to pray, but the truth is the busier we are the more we need to pray. Life is full of opportunities, challenges, changing seasons and many more intricacies than we can imagine. We have the benefit of access to the supernatural but the enemy will do his best to keep us focused on what's around us so we remain within the sphere of his control.

"...And behold, the Lord passed by... but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave..." I Kings 19:11-13

It's the habits we form in times of ease are what will carry us through challenges. Eljah had spent enough time in prayer to recognise God's voice and was able to respond accurately and get instructions for his next season. When we have a lifestyle of prayer, we're able to hear the still, small voice of the Lord in the middle of the many winds, earthquakes and fires that we will encounter in life. His voice acts as our compass, guiding us through the good and bad times and preparing us for what is to come. If prayer isn't prioritised we run the risk of being led by our emotions, thinking it's God speaking to us.

We may not hear the audible voice of God but as we make prayer a lifestyle, we allow ourselves to align with the leading and promptings of the Holy Spirit so we remain on His desired pathway for our lives.

Prayer: Lord reveal to me the necessity of prayer so I create a lifestyle of prayer that doesn't depend on my feelings or external circumstances.

Praying For Others

"I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land...." Ezekiel 22:30

The Bible tells us in Ezekiel that God Himself was looking for someone to stand in the gap but didn't find anyone. This tells us two things. First is that God is always looking for someone to stand in the gap (intercede) for His will to be done. Second is that a sure way to get God's attention is to take the position of an intercessor committed to birthing God's agenda. It's through intercession that we access God's mind and His power in a dimension that we may not have access to when praying for ourselves.

"O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen on your walls." Isaiah 62:6

God is very meticulous and has assigned intercessors to take on different aspects of His agenda so that there's no area that's left unaddressed. However, people don't always respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit largely because it's a selfless act and there are seemingly no immediate rewards. But once we start understanding how God works, then we will see how partnering with God is one of the most rewarding things we can do and we will reap the benefits both in time and in eternity.

"Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God," Daniel 9:20

Intercession exposes us to deep supernatural dimensions. When Daniel set out to pray for Israel to align with God's prophecy, the mission was so important to God that angel was dispatched to bring Daniel understanding. We also see Paul receiving tremendous revelations because his focus was on bringing God's agenda to manifestation. The more we partner with God, the more we see dimensions of His power that we may not necessarily access when our prayer focus is on ourselves alone.

Prayer: Lord help me come up higher in prayer to be someone You can trust as a spiritual watchman. Thank You for opening me up to a new dimension of prayer. As You look for people to stand in the gap, Lord find me worthy

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