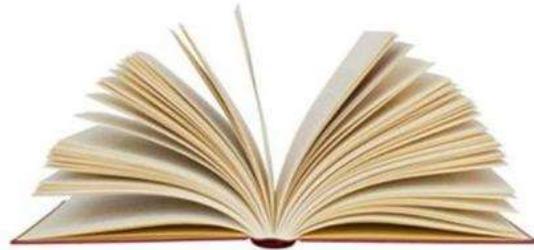


# PRAYER

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# Prayer – Talking to God

Have you ever wished there was someone to talk with, someone who would listen to each word that you spoke and understand all your hurts, petitions and disappointments and not judge you for any of the wrong that you have ever done? Prayer is one way to release all your stress. I have found that many times when I didn't know which way to turn I closed my eyes and just spoke to the Lord, I told him my fears, my cares and I asked for His help.

You may not know the proper way to pray and many have asked me this question .. Here is what you do.

Imagine meeting your best friend for coffee at your favorite cafe. Your friend knows everything about you. You can count on your friend being exactly where he says he will be. Anytime you need him, you can call and he won't be upset with you. He is willing to listen and responds with love and concern.

That is just like prayer. The only difference is that when praying your best friend is God and you are speaking to Him.

God is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He knows everything you ever did and He still loves you! He knows your future too. He has the best plans for your life. He cares for you so much that He gave His Son so that you could be with Him forever. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

You can talk to Him about anything that concerns you. Tell Him your desires and passions. Share your concerns for your loved ones. Talk out your fears with Him.

Communicate to God what is inside you without fear.

## Prayer – What do I say?

Prayer may be accomplished in many ways. The best way is to be natural, just as if you were in the room with Him. He is very anxious to hear every word you say. You can say whatever is on your heart. He'll even listen to your anger and sadness. Be honest with Him because He knows already what you are going through. Pour out your heart. It is easy to talk to Him and the more you do the more easier it will become.

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus taught the disciples a pattern for prayer. “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

## Prayer – Why Pray?

Why is prayer important? If God already knows all about you and knows all that He has written, why should you pray? It's because God created us to have free will. He wants us to come to Him willingly and not as robotic creations. He has given us a mind to make decisions and the most important decision is about eternity. Even though He knows the future, we don't know the future choices we will make. It's important to live by His guidance to make the right choices.

Prayer will strengthen you and build you up. Many times I have been in a situation where there was no where to turn and my mind was

telling me all these negative things that made me want to give up and yet when I prayed I realized more and more that my circumstances were not important and that God was greater than my circumstances and that He had my whole life in the palm of His hands and all I had to do was trust in Him.

In the Bible, you will find kings, prophets, and ordinary people like you and me, averted destruction by praying to God. One prayer stopped the sun, one prayed fire down from heaven, one gained fifteen years to his own life, and one prayer even saved a whole city. These people prayed intensely to the God who answers prayer.

When you pray, God listens to your cries. When you don't pray, God feels left out of your life. "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9b). As you pray consistently, you are affirming the existence of God in your life. You are building your faith as you see God's hand do His mighty work on your behalf just because you asked.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

## Ways to Pray

There are endless resources offering techniques, rituals, and even objects illustrating the ways to pray. Judging from the extensive array of books, radio programs, and websites that address praying, one desire continues to endure through the centuries, "Lord, teach us to pray . . ." (Luke 11:1). In our relationship with the Creator, we long to keep our communication with the Lord personal and true. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) provides Jesus' response as the way to achieve that communication with the Father. Since individuals are

most familiar with the King James Version, or its musical counterpart, let's consider each verse of Jesus' prayer:

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." When adoration is expressed, a prayer of worship is offered. God receives our highest esteem (1 Chronicles 16:29; Isaiah 6:3). As an adoring child, we center our attention on our Father's holiness and magnificence.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven." As we familiarize ourselves once again with WHO we are speaking to, we acknowledge God's authority in a prayer of submission. This way of praying is crucial if we desire answered prayer (1 John 5:14). Submission to God's authority requires that we humble ourselves, knowing that His will may differ from our personal desires (2 Chronicles 7:14-15). Yet we choose to be obedient to His will (Luke 22:41-42). The greatest prayer of submission was modeled through Jesus Christ.

## What to Say

"Give us this day, our daily bread." Of all the ways of praying, the prayer of supplication (earnest request), is the most utilized. Critical illness, financial distress, or any dire circumstance requires assurance that God is able to rescue us (1 John 3:21-22). The prayer of supplication may be agonizing as we attempt to convey our suffering (Luke 22:44). There will also be times when we desire God's protection, wisdom, and peace, assured that we rest securely in His care (1 Peter 5:7).

“And forgive us our sins, as we forgive our debtors.” There are two universal needs characteristic to man -- to be forgiven and to improve oneself, becoming a better person in the process. In response to our awareness of our sinful nature, we offer a prayer of repentance to our Heavenly Father (Romans 3:23-26). As we receive God’s acceptance through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, we recognize the necessity of forgiveness and repentance (Matthew 18:21-35).

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” God never tempts us, nor does He isolate us from facing decisions (1 Corinthians 10:13, James 1:12-15). A prayer of deliverance not only requires attitude, but demands action. Jesus faced temptation on several occasions (Matthew 4:1-11, 16:23, 27:38-44), and with a submissive attitude, acted in obedience to God. In a prayer of deliverance, we are affirming that God truly is our Deliverer from all forms of evil (Romans 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:18).

## What is Prayer? – Talking With God

What is prayer? Prayer is our direct line with heaven. Prayer is a communication process that allows us to talk to God! He wants us to communicate with Him, like a person-to-person phone call. Cell phones and other devices have become a necessity to some people in today’s society. We have Bluetooth devices, blackberries, and talking computers! These are means of communication that allow two or more people to interact, discuss, and respond to one another.

Too many people, prayer seems complicated, but it is simply talking to God. Here are some points about what prayer is:

## What is Prayer? – The Logistics

Many people question what is prayer because they desire to pray, but don't know how. Consider these tips:

**What Do I Say?** Remember, praying is like talking to your best friend! It's easy to talk to someone when you know they love you unconditionally!

Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and make you new in Him! "Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins" (Acts 3:19).

Tell Him your needs! "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Thank Him, for He died on the cross at Calvary for us! "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

**How Do I Say It?** Here's how I have learned to approach the Savior of my life.

With confidence and belief that He will deliver: "Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his glad welcome" (Ephesians 3:12). "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it" (Hebrews 4:16).

With joy that He can deliver. "You have shown me the way of life, and you will give me wonderful joy in your presence" (Acts 2:28).

With expectation that He is going to deliver. "Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly" (Psalm 5:3). "I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray" (Psalm 17:6).

## What Does the Bible Say About Prayer?

Pray for each other. Jesus set an example for us on what to pray. He prayed for His disciples and for every generation to come that would follow Him. His prayer was that God protect and strengthen them as long as they were in this world. Jesus also prayed for those who would come to believe in Him through the Gospel message (John 17).

Pray with faith. “So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Pray with worship and reverence. “Exalt the LORD our God! Bow low before his feet, for he is holy!” (Psalm 99:5). “‘Yes, Lord,’ the man said, ‘I believe!’ And he worshiped Jesus” (John 9:38).

You will know with confidence that God can hear you when you pray, so open that line of communication! Pray, knowing that no matter how far you roam, your connection with Him can never be lost!

“I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding” (Philippians 1:9).

#### Ways to Pray – Child’s Play

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.” For those who know that they are children of God, the anticipation of spending eternity with Him is glorious (2 Corinthians 5:1-5).

As we pray with adoration, recognizing the authority of our Heavenly Father, we rest in the assurance that His children are His highest priority. God’s unconditional grace and mercy guarantee our acceptance through Jesus Christ. The prayer of faith acknowledges all

that the Everlasting Father was, is, and will be as promised in His Word. And with our “amen,” we affirm that Our Father is trustworthy.

Child-like faith is all that God desires in the way we pray. Don't worry about how you phrase your prayer. It's your voice that God longs to hear.

## LORD'S PRAYER

Lord's Prayer - A Devotion Based on Christ's Model in Matthew 6  
The Lord's Prayer...

"Our Father in heaven" -- We need to always acknowledge first and foremost who we are talking to. He (God) is our heavenly Father. We address Him with respect just as we should address our earthly father with respect. He is the only true God who created all things in this universe, including ourselves. He loves us and we need to show our love for Him.

"Hallowed be your name" -- We must see Him as being holy, sanctified, consecrated; worthy of praise, honor and glory!

"Your kingdom come" - We acknowledge His coming kingdom. We pray that Christ will soon return and establish His earthly kingdom where we will reign with Him for eternity.

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" -- We need to be praying for His will to be done in our lives, so that we might bring glory to Him here on earth as He is also glorified in heaven. We need

to do things His way, instead of selfishly doing our own things to satisfy our own desires.

"Give us today our daily bread" -- We should ask our Father each day to provide for our needs, just as He promised in His Holy Word. His Word says that we don't have, because we don't ask. Of course, we must first know God through His Son, our personal Lord and Savior. If we don't know Christ, God won't acknowledge this request for daily provision.

"Forgive us our debts (or transgressions) as we also have forgiven our debtors (transgressors)" -- This speaks about forgiveness among our associates, neighbors, friends, family and loved ones. Any and all persons in our lives that we come in contact with in social or business situations are included as well. If we can't forgive others, how can we expect our heavenly Father to forgive us?

"Lead us not into temptation" -- We need to ask our heavenly Father to help us recognize every evil thing, every temptation before us. We need help to stay focused on our Father and see the evil that we might fall into, for what it is really is, a trap set by Satan to bring us down to his level.

"But deliver us from the evil one" -- Help us, dear Father, to steer clear of that liar and deceiver. Let us see clearly the path that you want each of us to walk. By the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us, may we never stray from your will and way...

Lord's Prayer - A Glorious Ending

Some commentators believe that the end of the Lord's Prayer - "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever" - was added by someone other than the original writer. Whether that's true or not, this last phrase simply emphasizes more praise and glory to

God the Father - so it's absolutely biblical... a glorious ending to a model prayer to God!

## Jesus and His Disciples

Jesus often shared the importance of prayer with his disciples. We often think of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as Jesus' model prayer, but he shared much more about prayer with his disciples.

# Scriptures on Prayer

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete (John 16:24).

Jesus told the disciples, "Until now you have asked for nothing in my name." It is not as though the disciples had not learned to pray before this. Jesus modeled prayer for them regularly and often taught them about prayer:

Do not pray like the pagans with endless babbling. (Matthew 6:7)

Pray with persistence. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Pray the disciples' prayer (the "Lord's Prayer") (Matthew 6:5-15)

The Father knows your needs before you ask. (Matthew 6:8)

Watch and pray regarding temptation. (Matthew 26:41)

Go secretly into a private place to pray. (Matthew 6:6)

Pray believing that God hears us. (Mark 11:24)

# Praying in the Name of Jesus

Curiously, before this Jesus had not suggested that the disciples pray in his name. The model prayer includes no such statement. But as they stood at the threshold of a whole new life era, Jesus instructed them to pray in his name—to ask the Father on behalf of the Son. When they walked out the door of the upper room—and especially when they walked out of another upper room about fifty days later on Pentecost—their world would be vastly different. They would have entered into a whole new realm of spiritual warfare. The evil one, whose heel had been bruised at the cross, would escalate the spiritual conflict as the church of Jesus Christ was established on Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told them in the upper room that a radical change was coming in regard to model prayer: “I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (John 16:23). Why will the Father give us what we ask in the name of Jesus? The answer is simple enough: he will do this if and when we are engaged in fulfilling the mission that Jesus gave us. If we return to an earlier moment in the evening, when Jesus was discussing the vine and branches, we will understand why: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (John 15:16–17).

# Model Prayer – Go and Bear Fruit

The process by which the Father will give us what we ask is directly linked to our appointment to go and bear fruit. The Father will give us what we need in order to accomplish this primary task of bearing lasting fruit for the kingdom of God. He will answer prayers in Jesus' name when we are fulfilling Jesus' mission—to help complete the purchase of people for God from every language and tribe and people and nation.

That does not mean that we cannot or should not ask God for what we need personally for our own existence and well-being. Jesus told us that the Father cares about those needs as well. We are, after all, more valuable than the birds of air that he cares for, feeds, and clothes (Matthew 6:28-32). Paul instructed us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6–7). But as nontraditional or anti-traditional as it may sound, it appears that we do not need to ask the Father in Jesus' name for the necessities of life. Of course, that is not to say we cannot or should not invoke the name of Jesus our High Priest at any time in our prayers, from giving thanks for a meal to the invocation at a high school graduation. But God has already promised separately to meet our needs—even apart from invoking Jesus' name and authority. Jesus had been instructing his disciples to do just that all along.

# Fulfilling the Great Commission

So it would appear that a special promise was to be inaugurated in the very near future (with Jesus' departure) for the disciples. In order to fulfill the mission—to bear lasting fruit, advance the kingdom, and complete the Great Commission—they were authorized to ask in Jesus' name and have the assurance that the Father would answer those model prayers.

This is clearly a refinement of the established teaching that if we ask in Jesus' name we can be certain that God will grant it. We have traditionally limited that promise by appending the words “according to his will.” However, we may be more in keeping with this instruction to instead add “in order to bear lasting fruit for the kingdom.” The use of Jesus' name and the resulting promise of the Father to answer add a previously unknown or untapped dimension of model prayer: a special authority for the task of bearing fruit for God's kingdom.

Before we can answer, “why should we pray,” we must know to whom we pray. There is only one supreme Creator and sovereign God. There is only one way to Him and that is through His only- Son, Jesus Christ. God, our Heavenly Father, is the only one we can be assured of who hears and answers our prayers. He is the God of amazing love, mercy, and forgiveness.

By Him, all things are possible. Jesus says in Mark 10:27, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

Daniel 9:18 tells us: “We do not ask because we deserve help, but because you are so merciful.” (Mercy means showing favor, compassion, and kindness.)

God’s ultimate demonstration of love is forgiveness of the sins each of us have committed. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it” (John 3:16-17).

He is the only God who has done this, and is the only God able to do so. But His enemy, Satan, has sent many false gods to deceive mankind. Do not be deceived nor allow anything or anyone to take priority over the only true and living God.

Prayer is the key to the heart of God. Prayer is the only way to a real and personal relationship with God.

Pray acknowledging He is God, and that you accept His gracious gift, Jesus Christ, as your Lord and Savior (Genesis 17:1, Romans 6:16-18).

Pray confessing our sins and accepting His forgiveness (Romans 3:23-26).

Pray that His will be done in our lives, that His Holy Spirit guide us, and that we be filled with the fullness of all God has for us.

Pray for (spiritual) understanding and wisdom (Proverbs 2:6-8, 3:5).

Pray with thanksgiving for all the ways He blesses us (Philippians 4:6). Pray when we are ill, lonely, going through trials or interceding for others (James 5:14-16, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Pray to worship Him (Psalm 95:6-7).

There is nothing we can’t pray about. There are abundant references to prayer in the Bible. The Bible tells us to “pray without ceasing” and “in everything give thanks to the Lord.” When we choose to have a positive attitude, we realize we have received many blessings for which to give God praise.

We find intimacy with God through communicating with Him in prayer. We go to Him in faith, knowing that He hears and answers all our prayers (1 John 5:14). Be confident that God knows and wants what is best for us; so ask that His will be done in all we seek from Him. Then, thank Him for it, even though it hasn't happened yet.

In addition, Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us we can pray boldly -- "That is why we have a great High Priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God. Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it."

Above all, pray with sincerity, honor, and humbleness before the Almighty God. "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results" (James 5:16).

# Hearing God's Voice

When you pray take a quiet time and listen.. Some have to talk and talk and feel like they are really reaching the heart of God and yet when they are finished praying they walk away and forget to listen. Listening may seem strange but many times I have listened and my inner being became alive. A song would come to mind that answered the question that I had just asked the Lord or a word or scripture would come to mind. If you take time to listen you will be surprised at what may happen.

Hearing God's voice is something we all long for-but did you know that it's not hard to do? In fact, God wants you to hear His voice! He doesn't speak to us through a quiver in our liver or through vibes or mediums. Hearing the voice of God is as natural as hearing your best friend talk to you. What's more, we can hear Him every day and not just on special occasions or by chanting special incantations. He speaks to us in the natural moments of life. Do you want to hear God's voice? Then you must be ready to listen.

Do you want to hear God's voice? If you do, it's possible you're hearing Him already, for He may be the one giving you the longing to hear Him.

The Bible itself declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). In another place, we read: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16).

You may hear people say that the Bible is just a book written by men, but the Bible itself claims to be God's Word! Can we rely on it? The evidence of history, archaeology, fulfilled prophecy and personal testimony over thousands of years is overwhelming that the Bible is, indeed, God's Word. Do you want to hear God's voice? Then read the Bible. Find a good daily reading plan, and stick to it.

# Hearing God's Voice through Prayer

When you want to have a conversation with someone, how do you begin? Do you stand in front of the person and hope they will talk to you? That might work, if the other person is outgoing enough, but usually we begin a conversation by opening our own mouths and talking, engaging the other person's attention. It's the same with God! He loves to hear us talk to Him, and it's in those moments that we prepare ourselves to hear the voice of God. Prayer is like saying, "Hello, God, it's me. I believe You created me and that You know way more about how I should live my life than I do. I'd like to get to know You better. Here's what's going on in my life, and I'd sure like Your thoughts on how to handle it. Would You please speak to me about this today?"

In an ordinary conversation, we speak, and then listen for the response of the other person. It's the same with God! Once we've prepared our hearts to listen through prayer, we're more likely to hear the voice of God. Does He speak to us through an audible voice? Some claim He does, but usually that's not the case. We may not actually "hear" the voice of God, but He speaks to us in many ways. Here are some of them:

God speaks through His Word

God speaks through our thoughts

God speaks through conversations with others

God speaks through circumstances

# Hearing God's Voice Through Jesus

The Bible also tells us that Jesus is God in the flesh. Therefore, if you want to hear the voice of God, you must study and know the teachings of Jesus. Here's how John describes Him: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." (1 John 1:1). You must also have a personal relationship with Jesus. Have you ever tried to carry on a conversation of any depth with a person you did not know? It doesn't usually go very far.

Shortly before He was crucified, Jesus met with His disciples to reassure them of what would happen after He was gone. He promised them a helper: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit, then, is the fulfillment of the way we hear God's voice!

## Hearing God's Voice with the Help of the Holy Spirit

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26). The second chapter of Acts describes the events that occurred on the day of Pentecost, after Jesus ascended into Heaven. Verse 3 says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, the Counselor promised by Jesus. This unique aspect of God's personality did not come to them as someone they could see and touch, but rather

He came to live inside them. That same Spirit is available to you and me today. Are you a Christian? If so, you already have the Holy Spirit available to you. Ask God for a fresh filling every day, and He will prepare your heart to hear God's voice. His Spirit, that still, small voice inside you, is the One who will remind you of what God said, and help you recognize God's opportunities in your life.

So we have the Bible, prayer, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and our own hearts to help us in hearing God's voice. Do you want to hear God's voice? That is the final question, for God responds to willing hearts. In the book of Revelation, we read: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20). God will never force you to obey Him, but waits for your willing response to His call. Are you hearing His voice right now? Don't let your final answer be the wrong one

## Waiting on God

Many times I have prayed and really expected an answer right away. Often I would wonder why nothing had happened and I didn't understand it too well. Then I realized that the moment I prayed God began to answer my prayer, it just took time for my prayers to go into effect. See, God has to work out situations in order for our prayers to work. Sometimes we have to pray for years about something and then suddenly one day that prayer is answered.

Are you waiting for God? He acts on our behalf as we wait for Him. "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4).

As you are waiting for God, He strengthens you. “But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings as eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

I once heard an illustration about how God strengthens us during trials. It went like this: “Did you know that an eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks? The eagle will fly to high spot and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, the eagle is soaring above it. The eagle does not escape the storm; it simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm. When the storms of life come upon us, we can rise above them by setting our minds and our belief toward God. The storms do not have to overcome us; we can allow God's power to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the storm that bring sickness, tragedy, failure, and disappointment into our lives. We can soar above the storm. Remember, it is not the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is how we handle them.”

## Waiting for God – He Blesses Us

When waiting for God, He blesses you. “Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him” (Isaiah 30:18).

What does it mean to be blessed by God while we wait on Him? As we wait on God and His timing, He can accomplish so much in our hearts. Often we find new purpose in life, receive answers to prayer,

see God work, increase our faith, and most often we see God's perfect plan fulfilled in our situation. Remember, waiting is not wasted time!

## PRAYER IS POWERFUL

The power of prayer should not be underestimated. James 5:16-18 declares, "...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops." God most definitely listens to prayers, answers prayers, and moves in response to prayers.

Jesus taught, "...I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20). 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 tells us, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." The Bible urges us, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

The power of prayer is not the result of the person praying. Rather, the power resides in the God who is being prayed to. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we

asked of him." No matter the person praying, the passion behind the prayer, or the purpose of the prayer - God answers prayers that are in agreement with His will. His answers are not always yes, but are always in our best interest. When our desires line up with His will, we will come to understand that in time. When we pray passionately and purposefully, according to God's will, God responds powerfully!

We cannot access powerful prayer by using "magic formulas." Our prayers being answered is not based on the eloquence of our prayers. We don't have to use certain words or phrases to get God to answer our prayers. In fact, Jesus rebukes those who pray using repetitions, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:7-8). Prayer is communicating with God. All you have to do is ask God for His help. Psalm 107:28-30 reminds us, "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven." There is power in prayer!

God's help through the power of prayer is available for all kinds of requests and issues. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." If you need an example of a prayer, read Matthew 6:9-13. These verses are known as the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer is not a prayer we are supposed to memorize and simply recite to God. It is only an example of how to pray and the things that should go into a prayer - worship, trust in God, requests, confession, protection, etc. Pray for these kinds of things, but speak to God using your own words.

The Word of God is full of accounts describing the power of prayer in various situations. The power of prayer has overcome enemies (Psalm 6:9-10), conquered death (2 Kings 4:3-36), brought healing (James 5:14-15), and defeated demons (Mark 9:29). God, through prayer, opens eyes, changes hearts, heals wounds, and grants wisdom (James 1:5). The power of prayer should never be underestimated because it draws on the glory and might of the infinitely powerful God of the universe! Daniel 4:35 proclaims, "All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'"

## PRAYER & FASTING

Prayer and fasting is defined as voluntarily going without food in order to focus on prayer and fellowship with God. Prayer and fasting often go hand in hand, but this is not always the case. You can pray without fasting, and fast without prayer. It is when these two activities are combined and dedicated to God's glory that they reach their full effectiveness. Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing what you desire. Rather, it is simply forcing yourself to focus and rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom you need.

The Old Testament law specifically required prayer and fasting for only one occasion, which was the Day of Atonement. This custom became known as "the day of fasting" (Jeremiah 36:6) or "the Fast" (Acts 27:9). Moses fasted during the 40 days and 40 nights he was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God (Exodus 34:28). King Jehoshaphat called for a fast in all Israel when they were about to be attacked by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20:3). In

response to Jonah's preaching, the men of Nineveh fasted and put on sackcloth (Jonah 3:5). Prayer and fasting was often done in times of distress or trouble. David fasted when he learned that Saul and Jonathan had been killed (2 Samuel 1:12). Nehemiah had a time of prayer and fasting upon learning that Jerusalem was still in ruins (Nehemiah 1:4). Darius, the king of Persia, fasted all night after he was forced to put Daniel in the den of lions (Daniel 6:18).

Prayer and fasting also occurs in the New Testament. Anna "worshipped night and day, fasting and praying" at the Temple (Luke 2:37). John the Baptist taught his disciples to fast (Mark 2:18). Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before His temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:2). The church of Antioch fasted (Acts 13:2) and sent Paul and Barnabas off on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). Paul and Barnabas spent time in prayer and fasting for the appointment of elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).

Prayer and Fasting - Required or Recommended?

The Word of God does not specifically command believers to spend time in prayer and fasting. At the same time, prayer and fasting is definitely something we should be doing. Far too often, though, the focus of prayer and fasting is on abstaining from food. Instead, the purpose of Christian fasting should be to take our eyes off the things of this world and focus our thoughts on God. Fasting should always be limited to a set time because not eating for extended periods can be damaging to the body. Fasting is not a method of punishing our bodies and it is not be used as a "dieting method" either. We are not to spend time in prayer and fasting in order to lose weight, but rather to gain a deeper fellowship with God.

There was a time in my life when my husband had walked out on me. I was devastated. We both were serving the Lord I thought and when he left I just didn't understand. I began to cry and cry and then realized that crying was not going to change anything. I got on the

phone and asked him to come back. He laughed at me and said that he was not. I hung up the phone shattered and then decided to dry my eyes and just give up on everything, especially him. I remember walking into the other room saying out loud "He is finished and so am I" when I heard a voice say "You have just thrown him to the wolves." I knew it was God's voice then in my spirit I heard "This only comes out by fasting and prayer". I loved the Lord so much and when I knew God was speaking I went back to the phone and called my husband again. He really didn't want to hear from me and all I said was "B..... you may think this is right but God just spoke to me and I am going to fast and pray for you and our marriage. He laughed at me but I had such a peace inside of me I really didn't care. I got my Bible out and started to read. I fasted for three weeks and those were the best three weeks of my life. I had peace about the situation and I also knew of many things that would happen before they did. Once I was on the phone to my mother and inside I heard "Get off the phone your husband is going to call" .. My mom at that time was a bit worried but I had heard from God and I knew that God was working everything out in my marriage. After three weeks my husband came back telling me of the things he had done, which I won't go into details here but they sure were hard to hear. The great thing was the Lord had already told me what my husband was going to confess so I was prepared. We serve a mighty God, a miracle working God and a God who loves us so much.

By taking our eyes off the things of this world through prayer and fasting, we can focus better on Christ. Matthew 6:16-18 declares, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." When I fasted for those three weeks only one person knew of it, my brother and I had to tell him because one day he brought me a hamburger and

fries and I refused them so I told him what was going on. But to all appearances I looked just the same as I always had.

Spending time in prayer and fasting is not automatically effective in accomplishing the desires of those who fast. Fasting or no fasting, God only promises to answer our prayers when we ask according to His will. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him." In the prophet Isaiah's time, the people grumbled that they had fasted, yet God did not answer in the way they wanted (Isaiah 58:3-4). Isaiah responded by proclaiming that the external show of fasting and prayer, without the proper heart attitude, was futile (Isaiah 58:5-9).

How can you know if you are praying and fasting according to God's will? Are you praying and fasting for things that honor and glorify God? Does the Bible clearly reveal that it is God's will for you? If we are asking for something that is not honoring to God or not God's will for our lives, God will not give what we ask for, whether we fast or not. How can we know God's will? God promises to give us wisdom when we ask. James 1:5 tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

Prayer and Fasting takes us out of the flesh and draws us closer to God. Our desires become what God desires and we find that what we may want turns into what God wants for us.

Never underestimate the power of prayer and fasting. I know it works.

After my three weeks of fasting I also knew that it was time to eat. I ate just as normal as I had ate before the fast. See, when God puts

you on a fast for a situation it is a little different than when we decide to go on our own fast. Always, when you decide to fast that you be sure to drink lots of fluids and if you have any medical problems and take medication please check with your Doctor first.

# Daniel Fast

## The Daniel Fast: It's Origin

The Daniel Fast is based on verses from the Bible found in Daniel 10:2-3. "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." These three weeks refer to the observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which take place during the first month of the year (Exodus 12:1-20).

Some also may cite the example in Daniel 1:8. However, in this verse Daniel did not want to eat the king's delicacies because it would have included food that was forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 11); to eat it would be defiling his body. Another reason would have been because the king's meats had probably been dedicated to the false Babylonian idols as was their practice. Daniel believed to do so would have been to acknowledge their idols as deities, against God's commandments.

## The Daniel Fast: It's Purpose

While the Daniel Fast is cleansing your body by omitting certain foods for a limited time, the deeper and true basis of intent is for spiritual connection. The purpose of Christian fasting is to seek a more intimate relationship with God while ridding your physical body of unnatural, self-gratifying food and drink. Your focus is to be on God, not on the fleshly things of the world. Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God.

During the Daniel Fast you will want to concentrate on prayer, Bible study, and reflection. The Daniel Fast is a great way to enter into preparation for growing in the Lord.

If you have a medical condition or are undergoing any medical treatments it is advisable to first consult your physician. You may also want to pray, consult a mature Christian or your pastor before fasting. Remember, fasting should be periodically and for limited days.

### The Daniel Fast: The Guidelines

The basic guidelines for the Daniel Fast include eating:

fruits, nuts

vegetables

water only to drink (to flush out toxins) some say natural fruit juices may be included if they contain no preservatives, sugars, etc., but even those juices should be very limited. Coffee and tea are not permitted.

The Daniel Fast should eliminate all meats, pastries, chips, breads, and fried food. Breads contain yeast, baking powder and so on; those are leavening agents and should be avoided. Leaven is symbolic of sin in certain scriptures (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

With these things listed, it is concluded that any food having artificial additives, chemicals, or that is processed should be totally avoided during the fast. Fruits and vegetables are the mainstay of the Daniel Fast and can be acceptably prepared in a variety of ways. Many fasting recipes and several cookbooks are designed for the Daniel Fast.

The Daniel Fast is a powerful spiritual discipline. With the coupling of fasting and prayer, one can open themselves to God's Holy Spirit. Having a sincere desire to seek God, you can come to Him with a contrite and repentant heart and He will minister to you in a powerful

way. God's awesome power is transforming and you will know that with God, all things are possible.

It is important to note that the Bible nowhere commands believers to observe a Daniel fast. As a result, it is a matter of Christian freedom whether to observe a Daniel fast. At the same time, the Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial. The book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions (Acts 13:2; 14:23). Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33).

“Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning” (Joel 2:12)

Intercessory Prayer - What is it?

Intercessory prayer is prayer for others. An intercessor is one who takes the place of another or pleads another's case. One study Bible defines intercession as "holy, believing, persevering prayer whereby someone pleads with God on behalf of another or others who desperately need God's intervention."

Intercessory Prayer - The Biblical Foundation

The Biblical basis for the New Testament believer's ministry of intercessory prayer is our calling as priests unto God. The Word of God declares that we are a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:4), a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), and a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:5).

The background for understanding this calling to priestly intercession is found in the Old Testament example of the Levitical priesthood. The priest's responsibility was to stand before and between. He stood before God to minister to Him with sacrifices and offerings. The priests also stood between a righteous God and sinful man bringing them together at the place of the blood sacrifice.

Hebrews 7:11-19 explains the difference between the Old and New Testament ministries of the priest. The Old Testament Levitical priesthood was passed on from generation to generation through the descendants of the tribe of Levi. "The Melchizedek priesthood" spoken of in this passage, is the "new order" of spiritual priests of whom the Lord Jesus is the High Priest. It is passed on to us through His blood and our spiritual birth as new creatures in Christ.

### Intercessory Prayer - Our Model Intercessor

Jesus Christ is our model for intercessory prayer. Jesus stands before God and between Him and sinful man, just as the Old Testament priests did: For there is one God, and one mediator (intercessor) between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34). Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus brings sinful man and a righteous God together at the place of the blood sacrifice for sin. No longer is the blood of animals necessary as it was in the Old Testament. We can now approach God on the basis of the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross of Calvary for the remission of sins. Because of the blood of Jesus, we can approach God boldly without timidity (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Jesus was an intercessor while He was here on earth. He prayed for those who were sick and possessed by demons. He prayed for His disciples. He even prayed for you and me when He interceded for all those who would believe on Him. Jesus continued His ministry of intercession after His death and resurrection when He returned to Heaven. He now serves as our intercessor in Heaven.

## Intercessory Prayer - Effective Intercession

In intercessory prayer, we follow the Old Testament priestly function and the New Testament pattern of Jesus - standing before God and between a righteous God and sinful man. In order to be effective standing "between" we must first stand "before" God to develop the intimacy necessary to fulfill this role. Numbers 14 is one of the greatest accounts of intercessory prayer recorded in the Bible. Moses was able to stand between God and sinful man because he had stood "before" Him and had developed intimacy of communication. Numbers 12:8 records that God spoke with Moses as friend to friend and not through visions and dreams as He did with other prophets.

As New Testament believers, we no longer sacrifice animals as in Old Testament times. We stand before the Lord to offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise (Hebrews 13:15) and the sacrifice of our own lives (Romans 12:1). It is on the basis of this intimate relationship with God that we can then stand "between" Him and others, serving as an advocate and intercessor in their behalf.

Peter uses two words to describe this priestly ministry: "Holy" and "royal." Holiness is required to stand before the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). We are able to do this only on the basis of the righteousness of Christ, not our own righteousness. Royalty is descriptive of the kingly authority that is delegated to us as members of the "royal family," so to speak, with legitimate access to the throne room of God.

# Unanswered Prayer

## Unanswered Prayer – Unheard Answers

Are you experiencing unanswered prayer? Does God turn a deaf ear to some of your desperate pleas for healing, finances, or protection? We all experience irritation when our best efforts to communicate result in an unsatisfactory response -- or worse, no response at all. We wonder, "Did you ever receive my message?" When we pray, we often equate the lack of immediate tangible results with God rejecting our prayers. In James 5:13-16 we are urged to pray earnestly with the promise of "powerful and wonderful results." Why would God emphasize the importance of prayer and then choose not to respond with a joyful answer?

When answering prayer, God responds first to our attitude, much as a parent responds to a precious child (Psalm 103:13-14). Our childish actions and attitudes frequently affect a prayer's desired results. Unforgiveness (Mark 11:24-25), selfishness (Proverbs 21:13), doubt (Matthew 21:21-22), greed (James 4:2-3), pride (2 Chronicles 7:14-15), and stubbornness (Zechariah 7:11-13) hinder God's desire to answer prayer.

Prayer is not a casual one-sided conversation. It is not "back-up insurance" guaranteeing a life free from pain and struggles. Prayer is actively acknowledging God as the source of all power and trusting that His answers, whether expected or unexpected, will accomplish greater things (Isaiah 46:9-10; 64:4).

Sometimes, God will answer, "No" to our desperate prayers. Any delay or unexpected outcome must not dishearten us. What is God's true purpose in answering our prayers (John 14:13)? What does God

want to complete in us through prayer (John 16:23–24)? God wants us to bring our every need to Him as He answers (yes or no) according to His character and will. God will never grant requests contrary to His will. While receiving a “Yes” usually makes us happy, God never promised us happiness. Happiness is based on circumstances. God wants us to have everlasting joy -- especially when He responds, “No, it will be done in My time, not yours. No, I will reveal My glory.”

## The Importance of Praise

Praise to God is what we offer in acknowledgement of God's excellent being. You might think that praise is the same as saying "thank you," but there is a difference. Thanksgiving describes our attitude toward what God has done, while praise is offered for who God is. Psalm 18:3 says "I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise..."

All believers are commanded to praise God! In fact, Isaiah 43:21 explains that praise is one reason we were created, "This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise." Hebrews 13:15 confirms this: "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name."

Praise originates in a heart full of love toward God. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Are you a Christian today? If so, you know that you love God because He first loved you! Without God's love, any praise you can offer is hollow. Love, born from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, is an essential part of your praise.

How can you bring praise to God? What can you do to make it an integral part of your life? Praise can be expressed in song, in verse, or in prayer and it is to be done continuously! Psalm 34:1 instructs, "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips." Psalm 71:6 says, "From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you."

Praise to God is expressed outwardly through our everyday actions, as well as inwardly in our thoughts. Praise is an act of Christian worship.

"Where do I begin?" you may ask. "How do I start praising God?" If praising God is new to you, try praising God for who He is to you, personally. Proclaim that God's goodness is without measure; it is abundant and overflowing! Here are some ways to get started:

Praise God for His holiness, mercy, and justice (2 Chronicles 20:21, Psalm 99:3-4).

Praise God for His grace (Ephesians 1:6).

Praise Him for His goodness (Psalm 135:3).

Praise God for His kindness (Psalm 117).

Praise God for His salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Praise to God can be offered anywhere! In time, it will become as normal as taking a breath. Sometimes we praise God inwardly as in Psalm 9:2, "I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High." Other times we have opportunity to give glory and praise to our God publicly. Psalm 22:22 says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you." Search out opportunities to bring praise to God!

Praise to God, while offered particularly by His children as the freewill expression of grateful hearts, will one day be offered by everyone! The Bible says that when He comes again, all mankind will praise Him and acknowledge Him as Lord. He is King over all the

earth. When we know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, our hearts long to praise His name. Philippians 2:9-11 tells us His name represents His being, describing who He is, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Bible also records:

All nature praises God (Psalm 148:7-10).

The sun, moon, and stars praise Him (Psalm 19:1 and 148:3).

The angels praise Him (Psalm 148:2).

Even the wrath of men is used by God to praise Himself (Psalm 76:10).

Children are to be taught to praise God (Psalm 78:4).

Praise To God - Do You Proclaim His Praise?

Your praise to God is evidenced through your salvation. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

How are you offering praise to God today? Do you know Him as your Lord and Savior? If not, why not begin there. Learn more about salvation. When others look at you, do they see a reflection of God's praise? Psalm 113:3 declares, "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised."

# Stories of Answered Prayer

## *The Quarter*

When I was a little girl I remember the teacher at school telling me to bring a quarter the next day as we were going to do a special project and there would be cookies and baked goods that I could purchase for a quarter and take home with me.

I went home all excited and told my mom the good news. Well the next day I did go to school with a quarter but never knew until years later where that quarter had come from.

Mom told me that when I had come home from school needing a quarter she had went to her purse and had no money at all. She decided to pray. She knelt down in front of the couch when my brother, sister and myself were in bed and pray that God would help her.

As she was praying her hands automatically went under the cushions of the couch and to her surprise she felt a coin. She brought her hand out and in it was a quarter. Now that is answered prayer...

## *The Lost Doll*

I was about 8 years old and I had this lovely doll. She was so pretty and my favorite toy that I played with all the time. One day I decided it was so nice outside that I would take my little doll buggy outside and put my baby in it so she could get some sunshine. I placed her ever so carefully and covered her with my little pink blanket and went inside to get a drink of water.

I was only gone about ten minutes and when I returned to get my doll she was gone.

Running in the house crying I went directly to mom and told her my problem. She looked at me so lovingly and told me to go and pray. Well I had never really prayed much at 8 years old but I knew mom wouldn't lead me astray so I went into my room, knelt down by the bed and started to cry and pray. "Lord, she is my favorite" as I went on and on. I then came through to mom and she dried my eyes. I asked her what I should do now. She said "Nothing, you already prayed and now you just leave it with the Lord".

About half hour passed and a knock came to our front door. Here stood a friend of mine holding my doll. "Anne, I stole your doll cause she was so pretty and I am sorry" she said. She went on to tell me that she didn't have a doll and when she had come over to see if I wanted to come outside to play she saw my doll, took it and ran. At first I was upset but then I heard my mom in the background say "Anne, go get your friend one of your old dolls as she doesn't have any". Well I did and I exchanged my old doll for my favorite doll. My friend went on home and I brought my buggy and doll inside. I was real happy then. BUT, mom stood over me and said "Anne, now what do you think you should do?" I really didn't know what she was talking about and asked her what? She told me to go now and thank God for answered prayer. I did and was so grateful that I had got my doll back so fast. That little story has lived with me my whole life and I was taught by my mom that every answered prayer that we receive is to be followed by a prayer of thanks to the Lord for caring so much for us.

## *A Ten Dollar Bill*

I remember when we were doing the Television Show, we met many people and they asked if we could hold a Saturday night Gospel sing. Our home at the time was big because it used to be a church and we used the back of it for the show and the front of the building for our home. We decided this would be great and opened our doors on a Saturday night. It went well the first night and I could see that maybe sandwiches along with the coffee that we supplied would be nice as many were coming in who were poor. Well, this one Saturday afternoon I realized I needed to go out and buy some tuna and bread and looking in my purse I found I had no money. I went over to my mom's house and asked her if she could lend me the money. She said that was all the money she had, which was a ten dollar bill but she would give it to me. I remember so clearly going out the door and laughing saying "Mom, God is going to give you that money before church tomorrow". I left and just casually said to the Lord, "Please give mom her money back".

After our Gospel Service that night the phone rang and it was mom.. "Anne, you will never guess what happened. You just left the house and I heard a little bird fluttering in the fireplace. I opened a window and went over to the fireplace which had glass doors and let the bird fly out to freedom. Then, I looked down and here lay a little nest. I guess the bird was trying to build it at the top of the chimney and it had fallen. I was going to put it in the Sun Room as a decoration on one of my big plants and I saw some purple paper showing through the twigs that the bird had made. (In Canada the ten dollar bill is purple) As I looked at the little nest I decided to pull out the paper and see what it was. There were pieces of string, twigs and ribbon all mixed into that nest. As I pulled the purple paper I realized it was a ten dollar bill. Anne, I just couldn't believe that God had returned my money and it was before Sunday.."

This is a true story and Our God is able to do mighty things. He is a God that even though our prayers are very simple He hears them.

## *The Cookies*

It wasn't that long ago I was sitting and just wishing I had a cookie. Now I know what you are going to say "Why didn't she just go to the store and buy one". Well here is what happened. I was on a diet and hadn't bought any cookies for a long time, but the urge came upon me to eat one. I let the thought go away and told myself that I really didn't need it.

It was only about a half hour later in walked my friend with a box of cookies and laid them on the table. You may laugh at this because I didn't even pray for cookies only thought it and yet Our Father decided to fulfill that wish that I had. We serve a wonderful God that loves us so much and wants to answer our prayers even at times when we don't ask Him too. Wish I could give you a cookie, but they are all gone.. I ate them...☺

## *James 5:13-18*

In this passage of scripture James teaches us about the power of prayer. Prayer is an important part of our Christian walk. God created us a spiritual people. There is a spiritual power available to us when we spend time in prayer and when we pray for others. We need to not neglect this important gift that has been given to us. James gives us some important instructions about the role of prayer in our lives and in the life of the church.

"Prayer is certainly a high and holy privilege. To think that, as God's children, we can come freely and boldly to His throne and share with Him our needs! ... The mature Christian is prayerful in the troubles of life. Instead of complaining about his situation, he talks to God about it; and God hears and answers his prayers."

Verse 13

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise.

Prayer and praise should be part of every Christian's daily life. When we are suffering or overwhelmed, we are told to go before the Lord in prayer. And when things are going well and we are filled with joy, we are told to sing praise which is another important part of prayer. Too often we only think of prayer as a time of asking God for favors or a time of serious contemplation. But another aspect of prayer is joyful worship of all that God has done for us. If we learn to sing praise during the good times, then when trouble comes, it will be easier to have faith when we go to God in prayer.

Plummer points out, "The convert has still to be taught that there can no longer be this divorce of religion from conduct, but that prayer and

praise must go hand in hand with work and life. ... All of us are apt to draw far too strong a line of distinction between Church and home, between Sunday and week-day, between the time that we spend on our knees and that which we spend in work and recreation. Not, alas! that we are too scrupulous about allowing worldly thought to invade sacred times and places, but that we are very jealous about allowing thoughts of God and of His service to mingle with our business and our pleasures, or at least take no pains to bring about and keep up any such mingling. Our worship is often profaned by being shared with the world; our work is rarely consecrated by being shared with God."

Verse 13 tells us what we should do if we are suffering. Are you suffering? Are you facing hardship or misery? James tells us to pray. This is the divine remedy for all our bad times – whether it's physical sickness, mental confusion, or spiritual warfare. We need to learn to come to God in prayer, and to do it quickly, often, and continuously.

Verse 14

Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Now James gives us important instruction for those times when we are sick. We need to take these needs to the church. We don't need to carry the burden alone. We have a family of fellow believers who can support us in prayer at our time of need.

When we are hurting, we're sometimes like the little boy who had a sore lip. His Mom told him to pray for the pain to go away, but the boy said, "My lips are hurting too much to make the words." Sometimes we need others to pray for us.

The Expositor's Bible comments, "After charging his readers in general terms to resort to prayer when they are in trouble, St. James

takes a particular and very common instance of trouble, viz., bodily sickness, and gives more detailed directions as to the way in which the man in trouble is to make use of the relief and remedy of prayer. He is not to be content with giving expression to his need in private prayer to God; he is to call for the elders of the Church."

It is important that we are willing to pray for one another. Prayer causes changes to happen. We may not understand it, but God has chosen to act through the prayers of his children. This is why we need to be faithful in praying – for ourselves, for our family, and for others, and especially those in need.

Verse 15

And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Here is a wonderful promise from God. The prayer of faith can result in healing. God hears our prayers and raises up those for whom we are praying. Prayer is a powerful force in our lives and in the lives of all believers. As we reach out to God, he reaches out to us. As we pray for others, God raises them up. What a privilege we have that God hears our prayers.

"The directions James gives are important in their bearing on the life of the Christian Church. There is to be the closest possible friendship and sympathy amongst members. The elders are to hold themselves in readiness at any time to serve any member with prayer and sympathy and spiritual counsel. They are to be men who can offer the prayer of faith and who will respond when called upon to visit cases of sickness and trouble."

Verse 16

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

James now tells us the importance of confessing our sins. Often our physical health is affected by our sinful behavior. Until we are willing to admit our sins, we will continue to face the trouble and consequences of our sinful lifestyle. This is why it's important for a church to have an open, loving atmosphere where we can share our needs with others without fear of condemnation or judgemental attitudes. This does not mean that we need to share all the details of our life with others, but it does mean that we need to be willing to admit our own faults and be open to asking for prayer. There are times when we cannot go it alone. We need the love and support of our church family.

We just finished the Mardi Gras season. Too many churches are like going to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans – everyone is wearing a mask! We need to take off our masks, and let our needs be known.

When someone comes to us with a need, we must be willing to pray for them. In fact James says pray for one another. This is because we all have needs, and we should not only be willing to pray for others, but also we should not be afraid to ask for prayer for our own needs. James gives us the reason for making our requests known – that we may be healed because the prayer of a righteous person has great power. Our righteousness is not determined by our goodness, but by our right standing with God. If we have made Christ Lord of our life, then we are righteous before God in spite of our many failings. So we know that we can come before God in prayer and our prayers will have great power.

Isaac Newton wrote, "I can take my telescope and look millions and millions of miles into space; but I can lay my telescope aside, go into my room and shut the door, get down on my knees in earnest prayer,

and I see more of heaven and get closer to God than I can when assisted by all the telescopes and material agencies on earth."

If a church is willing to be a praying church, there is no limit what God can do in the hearts and lives of the people. God has given us a great power – a power to overcome trouble, a power to deliver those in sin, a power to heal and comfort, and a power to see lives transformed. That power is through prayer. In the Star Wars movies, Luke Skywalker was encouraged to let the Force be with him. That was science fiction, but in a real way Christians have a divine force available to them. That force is the power of prayer. The only problem is too many Christians don't allow that force to be with them.

Verse 17

Elijah was a man of like nature with us and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

Now James gives us the example of Elijah. This story is recorded in 1 Kings 17 and 18. In order for all Israel to know the power of God, Elijah had told Ahab it would not rain until Elijah spoke the words. This led to a long period of drought and the great confrontation between the prophets of Baal and Elijah.

We went through a long period of drought here in the central valley a few years ago. Everyone affected by the agriculture industry was praying for rain. And then El Nino came, and everyone was praying for the rain to stop.

When Elijah prayed that it would not rain, it stopped raining for three and a half years. We consider Elijah to be a remarkable man of faith, and yet James points out that Elijah was of like nature as we are. He was the same as us! The difference is that Elijah prayed fervently. In other words, anything Elijah could do, we could also do if we would

pray as Elijah prayed. What a wonderful example for us. Let us be like Elijah – willing to pray, and willing to believe God.

I know not by what methods rare,  
But this I know, God answers prayer.  
I know not when He sends the word  
That tells us fervent prayer is heard.  
I know it cometh soon or late;  
Therefore we need to pray and wait.  
I know not if the blessing sought  
Will come in just the guise I thought.  
I leave my prayers with Him alone  
Whose will is wiser than my own?

Verse 18

Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.

After three and a half years of drought, Elijah prayed. And what happened? This verse tells us that the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth its fruit. What do you need from God? What drought in your life are you facing? Spend some time in prayer, and you too will see the rain of God's blessing, and you will see the fruit coming forth. Prayer changes things. God listens to our petitions and he answers from heaven. Let us be people of prayer, and we will see an abundance of blessings in our family, our church, and our community.

"Elijah knew how to use the mighty instrument of prevailing prayer. Through prayer he became what he was and wielded the power he did."

At the end of verse 16 James wrote these words, "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects." Do you realize that your prayers have great power? They do. Let us not neglect this wonderful gift that God has given us. Let us commit to spend time in prayer with God, every day and throughout every day. Then we will see God's great power in our life, and we will know his love, his comfort, and his divine presence with us – even when we are facing times of trouble.

We have on our Website "PRAYER CHANGES THINGS" Prayer is definitely the Key that will unlock the Power of God and you will see Miracles take place around you and in you.

If you do not know Jesus as your Personal Savior I ask you to say this little prayer.

Dear Father,

I ask you now to come into my heart, I am a sinner and want to serve you. I am tired of my life and the way it has been going. I ask for new life in You. Please forgive me of my sin and live with me, have your Holy Spirit lead me and guide me. I thank you God for sending Your Son Jesus to die on the cross and shed His blood for my sins. In Jesus Name I ask ... amen

If you have said this prayer you are now a New Person, old things are passed away. Get into your Bible and learn all about Jesus and what He can now do in your life. If you need prayer please contact us at our address on the back cover.. God bless you...

Prayer is the mightiest tool that we have to chase away the enemy. Our communication with the Almighty is powerful and we need to keep that communication open at all times. Never forget that you are loved and that God has a plan for your life.



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### Books by Anne Skinner

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