

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

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The Importance of Prayer

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" Mark 1:35 Prayer is communion with God. Prayer is that act of going into God's presence to be with the Lord. Prayer is bringing God and His resources into our earthly realities. Prayer is drawing upon divine resources to influence human reality. Prayer is breathing the breath of heaven. Prayer is the master key to everything we have been called to do. Without it our activities are empty, human and lack the breath of heaven. It is temporal and will never last. In looking at the life of Jesus, I see a man that prays. If there is an aspect of His life that seems so conspicuous to me, it is His prayer life. It was his habitual practice to wake up early in the morning before day to go to a quiet place to pray. Often, he will depart from the people he was ministering to, and go to a quiet place to pray. Many times he spent all the night in prayer. What is this thing called prayer that Jesus loved to do it so often? What is in prayer that is so important that Jesus, the son of God, spent a large portion of his life doing and encouraging his disciples to do? If Jesus being whom He was, needed to spend so much time in prayer, do we not need to spend even much more time than Jesus in prayer? Why is prayer so important?

1. We get to know God through prayer: One of the most important reasons why we need to pray is that we get to know God better through prayer. Prayer is communion with God. Those who know God better are those who spend quality time in God's presence. These are men who know the secrets and the heartbeat of God. It is not possible to know God when we are occasional visitors into God's presence. It is not possible to know God if we are the type of Christian who just pop in to God's presence to say "hi" and "goodbye". We cannot get to know God if we are the type of Christians who treat God as "fire extinguisher" - that is using God for our ends. God reveals Himself to those who really care; to those who are willing to pay the price of separating themselves often and long in order to seek Him. "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

2. We are empowered through prayer: Prayer is like charging your spiritual batteries. Many of you use mobile phones. What happens to it if you continue using it and never charge it? The answer is obvious. The battery will run down and sooner or later the phone will stop functioning until it is adequately and fully charged. No matter how good or modern a mobile phone may be, it is useless unless it is charged. In the same way we cannot afford not to pray. God renews our strength when we pray. No matter how strong or gifted you are, if you do not pray, you are on your way to death, destruction and irrelevance. No matter how large and demanding our ministry is, we should spend enough and adequate time in prayer. The task that has been committed to us by God can only be fulfilled by people who are constantly filled with spiritual life.

3. Prayer makes you dangerous for the devil and for the kingdom of darkness. There is nothing that is as dangerous to the devil as a Christian that prays. The devil will not bother with Christians who are lukewarm, prayerless and carnal. They pose no threat to him. Praying Christians are the greatest dangers to the kingdom of hell. And mark me, the devil will do everything in his power to stop you or discourage you from praying. The devil loves those Christians who are too busy to pray. He hates those Christians who make out time to immerse themselves into God's presence. These are his greatest threats. These Christians become too hot for him. Their presence cast our demons. Their words are like fire. They change spiritual realities around them- because they pray.

4. Prayer changes you: Prayer not only changes situations and circumstances, but one of the most important reasons we need to pray is that God changes us in prayer. Jacob was a cheat and a deceiver. He had cheated all his life. He always had his way. Not until he really started to pray. He was so afraid of meeting his brother Esau that he decided to set time aside to pray. He prayed all night and never came out the same. His name changed from Jacob to Israel. His destiny changed. (Genesis 32:24-28). Maybe you have struggled all your life to be good but nothing seems to change. You have struggled to become a better person but you still have problems with your carnality. Prayer is the key. Prayer will change you because God works through prayer.

5. God does things in answer to prayer: God does answer prayer. The Bible says "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. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matt 7:7-11) God gives good things to those who ask Him. God answers prayer. Another verse says "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:3). God gives to those who ask Him. God gives to those who trust Him to the point of asking Him. God is able to answer your prayers even beyond your expectations "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Eph 3:20. No matter what your situation is, no matter what circumstances you may be facing, take it to God in prayer. He is able, more than able to answer your prayers. He wants to answer your prayers. He longs to hear your prayers. He wants to know that you trust Him, that you believe in him to the point of coming to Him with all that touches you. It makes Him glad. It is His joy to answer your prayers.

6. Prayer involves God in what you do: When we pray you invite God into your situations. It is like bringing heaven into earth. It makes eternal values real. The presence of God in any situation delivers, releases, and builds. It transforms the temporary and earthly to become eternal.

7. Prayer clarifies our perspectives: When we pray, we receive wisdom and our perspectives are clarified and we are able to make wise and godly decisions. Prayer makes us to see into spiritual realities beyond what the human eyes can see. Prayer gives us an understanding of the spiritual powers behind activities and realities visible to the human eyes.

8. Through prayer we are delivered from temptations: "And when he was at the place, he said to them 'pray that you enter not into temptation'. And he said to them, why sleep ye? Rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40,46). Prayer makes us able to withstand temptations. Many have fallen and defeated because they neglected prayer. Our enemy the devil, the tempter is at the business of weakening and destroying believers. Jesus encourages to be in the place of prayer lest we fall into temptation. Prayer is the key. There are many more reasons why it is expedient to pray. Prayer is God's key. No matter what your situation is God wants to teach you to pray. Are you willing to learn?

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Eph 3:20 "We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. ...What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and noble methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use- men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men- men of prayer" E. M. Bounds