

How to be an Effective Prayer Warrior



Jack County Cowboy Church

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Have an EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE and become a PRAYER WARRIOR.

Table of Contents

1. What is Prayer?
2. The Purpose of Prayer
3. The Privilege of Prayer
4. Effective Prayer
5. Strength in Prayer
6. Pray and I Will Answer
7. Sin of Prayerlessness

Introduction

Today, we are living in desperate times. Yet, the Church is not desperate before God in prayer. Jesus said to Peter, James, and John, "What? Could you not watch with me one hour?" (**Matthew 26:40**) We say, "Shame on you, Peter! Shame on you, John! How terrible! Not watching with the Lord for even one hour!" But look out. Whenever you point a finger at someone else, there are three pointing back at you.

Prayer is the most important activity a born-again Christian can engage in. It should head your list of priorities, for certainly the world around us desperately needs prayer. Prayer will open the door for God to do a glorious work in these last days. Prayer will stem the tide of evil. This collection of studies on prayer presents you with certain Scriptures, thoughts, and rules. When you put them into practice in your life, they will bring you into a new relationship with God, and help you to experience a more effective and dynamic prayer life in which to do battle against the evil forces in these last days.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spirit powers and principalities, thus the weapons of our warfare cannot be carnal. Prayer is the most potent weapon that we possess in our spiritual arsenal and by it we can pull down the strongholds of the enemy. Does Satan have a strong hold on your city government? Does he have a strong hold on your husband or wife or children? Through this book you will learn how to break down these strong holds.

What is Prayer?

Prayer can be expressed in three basic forms: worship, petition, and intercession, with variations within each form.

The first form of prayer is **worship**. It is a spontaneous result from the conscious awareness of God. As I realize the greatness of God and His nearness to me and His love for me, I naturally respond with deep, inner worship of Him. One day I watched a little gnat flying around. I was amazed at how small it was, and yet so wonderfully designed. He was able to defy the laws of gravity, suspending himself in the air and then darting around rapidly. I thought, "God you are so wise in the design of even small forms of life."

Worshipping God for His creative genius is a form of prayer, that consciousness of who He is and what He has done inspires worship. When I recognize the wisdom and power of God, I stand in awe of Him. Thanksgiving and praise arise spontaneously as I become conscious of the goodness of God to me that I know I do not deserve.

Christians should engage in this form of communion and prayer constantly. We should become more conscious of Him as He speaks to us through nature. We see His power in the storm and lightning. We smell His loveliness in a rose. We see His design in a daisy. "In the rustling grass, I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere." Sometimes we verbalize our worship, often we don't. It's simply an overwhelming feeling within our hearts as God manifests Himself to us in a thousand different ways.

We just say, "Ohhh, God is so good!" We worship Him and commune with Him in the recognition of His love and grace.

The second form of prayer is **petition**, that is in the narrow sense, as I bring my personal needs before God and ask Him for the help that I need so desperately. Day by day I cry out to the Lord for His wisdom, guidance, strength, and provision. There are some people who dismiss personal petition prayer as selfish. They say that it's wrong to pray for anything for yourself because you ought to be thinking more of others.

I should pray for others and be concerned with their needs. Nevertheless, I must also be concerned in prayer with my own needs. Call it what you want, but I have certain definite needs that must be met before I can be of benefit to others.

The Bible says in **2 Timothy 2:6**, The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. In other words, you can't give what you don't have. Like measles, you can't give 'em unless you got 'em. Therefore, I must first be a partaker of God's grace, love, strength, and power. Then, as I partake, I have something to share with others.

Luke 11:1-2 says, One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: "“Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. **Matthew 6:10** adds, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The first part of the prayer is addressed to God, worshiping God for what He is, "Hallowed be your name." Then comes the prayer for the kingdom of God, "Your kingdom come." We are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

This first phrase focuses on revering the name of the Father. It is a call, not so much for the Father to make his name known, but for us to revere the Father's name. Such reverence does not merely keep his name off our lips during inappropriate times but actively puts it on our lips when it should be there. We revere the name of the Father when we properly ascribe to him the works he has done, will do, and is doing.

This second phrase is qualitatively different from the first; in fact, nearly all of the following phrases are qualitatively different from the first phrase of the Lord's Prayer. The first phrase of the Lord's Prayer offers praise to the Father, but this phrase petitions the Father to do or bring something into being. This petition is a prayer that the Father would bring his kingdom to pass now and in our lives every day until that day sometime in the future when his kingdom will be fully revealed in all its power and glory.

I add the verse from Matthew that says, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. This phrase is also a petition, a request made to the Father that he would do something. This request, however, is not

solely for the Father to do his will, but that the Father's will would be done by all of his creation. This means, at the very least, us. Furthermore, according to these chapters of Matthew the Father's will is not some nebulous concept for which we pray. We learn the Father's will by reading about Jesus's actions while he lived on earth. When we pray for The Father's will, we are **not** merely asking the Father's directions about where we should live and work and who to marry. When we pray for the Father's will to be done, we are praying that all people would follow Jesus as in **Matthew 8:1**, the outcast in society would be touched and healed as in **Matthew 8:2-3**, all people would have the faith to trust God in all circumstances as in **Matthew 8:5-13**, all people would serve Jesus and his mission in whatever way they can as in **Matthew 8:14-15**, all people would continually give their burdens to Jesus as in **Matthew 8:16-17**, no one would abandon Jesus even when times are difficult as in **Matthew 8:28-34**, and the list can go on and on.

We pray for the Father's will, not so that we might know the path our lives might take, but that the work Jesus came to do on earth would continue. Such is the Father's will and for such, we pray.

The phrase, on earth as it is in heaven, is one of the phrases that is not actually a petition; it is a qualifier of the previous and first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer. With this phrase, Jesus sharpens the focus of the petitions asking for the coming of the Father's kingdom and the doing of the Father's will: on earth as they are in heaven. Such a focus presumes that heaven exists, that the Father's kingdom rules in heaven, and that the Father's will is done in heaven. These claims may seem obvious, but they must be stated. We are not instructed to pray merely for a peaceful time on earth, we are praying for the emergence of heaven — a very real realm with a real king who has a specific will — upon the earth. Furthermore, Matthew's Gospel clarifies that the Father wants us to become participants in the emergence of the Father's heavenly kingdom. Thus, when we pray for the Father's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are praying that Jesus would call disciples to go into specific areas of the world with the message of the gospel and the gospel would be proclaimed until such time that the people's hardened hearts push it away. That the world would have eyes to see the works of Jesus and that they would believe.

Look at any of the prayers of the saints in the old Testament and you will see this form of reverence and petition at the beginning of their prayers.

The very next petition is **Luke 11:3-4**, Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.

These are personal petitions for my own needs. I do have needs, and God wants me to bring those needs before Him. There's nothing wrong with praying and asking God to supply my rent money or whatever else I might need.

This third petition, Give us this day our daily bread, of the Lord's Prayer acknowledges a daily reliance upon the Father's open hand to provide us with bread, but this prayer is not limited solely to food for the stomach. When seen through the lens of the Gospel, when we ask the Father to give us this day our daily bread, we are asking for the Father's daily presence during our times of grief and emptiness, a heart to have compassion on others even when we are hurting, and the strength to meet the needs of others even when we feel empty.

This third petition encourages us to trust the Father for the food we consume each day, but it also encourages us to thank him for the food he has provided. But this petition is not solely about the stomach. When tempted to turn stones into bread, Jesus replied by quoting Moses when he said, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” in **Matthew 4:4** from **Deuteronomy 8:3**. The Father provides for us all we need, we only need to ask him for it. For such we pray when we pray “Give us this day our daily bread.”

This fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer must be read with its qualifier if we are to understand its meaning and if we are to truly be able to pray for the Father’s forgiveness. Luke says, Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us, but most people only know from Matthew forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

All theological wrangling aside, this petition links the forgiveness we receive from the Father to the forgiveness we give to others. If we are not able to forgive others, what right do we have to seek the Father’s forgiveness for ourselves? Most think this has to do with worldly debt, Money, but we owe a greater debt to the father than anything we could owe on earth. When we pray and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven others we are praying for the proper sort of humility to be part of the Father’s kingdom, the humility required to always seek the spiritual good of others, and to the realization that the forgiveness we offer others affects the forgiveness the Father offers to us. Matthew 18:23-35 tell us that very plainly.

This petition and its qualifier might be THE most practical of all the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer. Not only does it affect every relationship with have with every other human being, but it also appears to drastically affect the relationship we have with the Father. If we are unwilling to offer complete forgiveness to others, how can we expect the Father to forgive us?

And the fifth and last petition of the Lord’s Prayer, And lead us not into temptation, may seem a bit odd as it is a request that God would not lead us into temptation. I suspect that the general expectation regarding God and his leading would be that he would always be taking us closer to holiness and sanctification but never into any areas of temptation and sin. Like the fourth petition and its qualifier, this petition implies there is some participation on our part. The gate leading to the Father’s path is narrow and the way difficult, by praying that he lead us not into temptations, we are praying that we do not allow our selfish desires to request sinful permission from God, and have the strength to follow God’s ways even when they are difficult. Do not give into the temptation of thinking we can earn salvation or place more value in being moral than in loving God. We must rejoice with others when they receive rewards, both spiritual and material, from the Father and always seek to serve others.

If we follow in the will of the Father then we can expect that he will lead us along the path wherein lies the least temptations. Furthermore, as we follow the Father’s will, we still need his hand to keep our sinful hearts from constantly seeking our own pleasure instead of the Father’s pleasure. For such we pray when we pray “And lead us not into temptation.”

The third form of prayer, **intercession**, is the type of prayer that can be considered work. Worshiping God is not work, that's glorious! It's spontaneous, beautiful communion and fellowship with God. Petition isn't too much work because I'm so interested in what I need that I can become involved in it very easily. But when I begin to intercede, then I must labor.

Paul, in his closing remarks to the church at Colosse, makes mention of one of his fellow laborers, Epaphras. **Colossians 4:12** says, Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

Here prayer is described as work. Through intercessory prayer I reach out beyond myself and pray, not for my own needs, but for the needs of those around me. I pray for my family, friends, and neighbors who don't yet know Jesus Christ. I pray for the needs of those in the Body of Christ. I bring before God all the various needs of others that have come to my attention.

It is during intercessory prayer that I become aware of what prayer actually is, a spiritual battle. There's a conflict taking place around us continually, a spiritual conflict. Invisible to our physical eyes is the spirit world which is divided into two categories, the forces of good and the forces of evil. These are in constant combat with one another and diametrically opposed to each other. When I enter into intercessory prayer I step right into the battle and begin to fight in this spiritual warfare.

Paul the apostle said in **Ephesians 6:12-13**, For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Paul then goes on to list the armor of God that should clothe a Christian for battle. For, the apostle said, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, because we're not in a physical battle. If we were, then we'd have worldly weapons. But because we're in a spiritual battle, the weapons and armor of our warfare must be spiritual. **2 Corinthians 10:4** says, The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

The Armor of God. What all is it?

Ephesians 6:14-17 says, 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Let's break it down.

The Belt of Truth

The first piece of armor Paul mentions. What purpose does the belt of truth serve for us? Belt buckles are not designed to stop bullets. But there was a time when belts were an important part of defensive armor.

When the apostle Paul describes the armor of God, he is talking about more than a simple set of helpful tips. He is talking about the impregnable defenses of the Almighty God. These are keys to withstanding the attacks and onslaughts Satan the devil. They are ultimate and infinitely powerful tools available to us as Christians.

Why, of all things, a belt? He could have started with the mighty sword of the Spirit, the towering shield of faith, the shining breastplate of righteousness, anything but some measly old belt. But he didn't. So that begs the question, why?

What was the belt used for in the Roman army? The belt—known as the *cingulum* or *balteus*, played a crucial role in the effectiveness of a soldier's armor. It was the belt that held the scabbard, without which there would be no place to put a sword. Imagine an overzealous soldier, fired up and charging out into battle, but without his belt, and consequently without a weapon!

In addition, from the belt "hung strips of leather to protect the lower body." The Matthew Henry Commentary says the belt "girds on, secures, all the other pieces of our armor." Truth should cleave to us as a belt cleaves to our body.

What is truth? Jesus said in **John 17:17**, Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Jesus, praying to the Father, gives a clear and straightforward definition of truth, God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, The Holy Bible was given by inspiration of God. The Greek expression translated "inspiration of God" literally means "God-breathed"! He actively and fully inspired the Bible to reveal His truth to us.

His promises, His commands, His word, they are all truth, plain and simple. If God says something, there is no force that can stop Him from doing it, we can rest assured that it will be done.

What does truth have to do with a belt?

1 Thessalonians 5:21 says, Test all things; hold fast what is good.

As Christians, we are to test all things and then hold on only to that which is good, the truth, discarding all else. We are to be like the Bereans in **Acts 17:11** who searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. If we are not convinced that our principles and beliefs are without exception 100 percent true, how can we expect to accomplish anything?

The belt used in Roman armor, as we have learned, provided a place for the soldier's sword. Our sword, the sword of the Spirit, likewise needs a sheath. Truth is vital because, like a Roman soldier's belt, it allows us to carry the sword of the Spirit and use it effectively.



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What are the dangers of not wearing the belt? **Romans 12:2** says, And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The world we live in teaches that truth is what we make it, that good and bad are relative and that there are no absolutes, only equally valid opinions. But the Bible teaches that truth is God's Word, that good and bad are defined by Him and that there are eternal and unchangeable absolutes, uninfluenced by opinions.

Paul wrote to the Romans telling them to "not be conformed to this world." Part of that means not buying into a system of belief that says absolute truth is a myth. As Christians, we know both that there is truth and that it is absolute. **2 Timothy 2:15** says, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Imagine a belt with a segment missing. No matter how tiny the sliver that isn't there, the belt is still useless. To do its job, it must be one continuous, unbroken piece.

Now imagine living a way of life you don't completely agree with. Maybe it doesn't seem like a big deal, after all, what are a couple minor points that you're not sure about?

They are everything. To try to live God's way without total belief in its validity is like trying to hold your sword up with a belt that isn't continuous. Neither will work. Our trust in God and His Word must be solid, without break, or else we will quickly find ourselves without a weapon. No matter how effective the rest of our armor is, we are useless without our sword. We need to be rightly dividing the word of truth, knowing what we believe, and why.

So, how secure is your belt?

The second piece of armor Paul mentions is "the **breastplate of righteousness**." Why is the breastplate important for both ancient soldiers and us?

Facing the hordes of Satan, you brace yourself and pray. The hosts of your enemy share a collective, malicious grin, waiting for the command to do their worst.

The battle cry sounds. They begin their charge; you tighten your grip on your sword and raise your shield. Weapons begin swinging with unrivaled fury; you do your best to parry the onslaught, but there are too many weapons to block. Eventually, you watch as one of your opponent's swords begins making a clean arc that continues right past your shield and toward your chest.

You brace yourself, preparing for the worst and expecting your quick demise, watching the weapon move ever closer to you as time slows to a maddening crawl, waiting, waiting, when *CLANG!* The reverberating noise of the sword striking your breastplate pierces the air.

Shaking your head in disbelief, you look down to find that the breastplate of righteousness stopped the deadly blow in its tracks. Delivered by righteousness and with renewed vigor, you plunge back into the fight.

What purpose does a breastplate serve?

The breastplate was a central part of the Roman soldier's armor, it provided protection for the torso, which contains vital organs like the heart, lungs and so on. Without a breastplate, a soldier would be asking for death, as any attack could instantly become fatal. With a sturdy breastplate, the very same attacks become ineffective and useless, as blows glance off the armor.

Why is righteousness associated with protective armor like a breastplate?

Proverbs 11:4 says, Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

Without righteousness, we leave ourselves open to almost certain death. With righteousness, just as with a breastplate, the otherwise fatal attacks of our enemy are thwarted.



What is righteousness?

Psalms 119:172, My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.

1 John 3:4, Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

1 Corinthians 15:34, Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

To be righteous is to do what is *right* in God's eyes. God's commandments are righteousness. In contrast, lawlessness is sin, and sin is the opposite of righteousness. So to be righteous is to obey God's laws of love.

Jesus also said in **Matthew 5:6**, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

What other characteristics does Paul compare with a breastplate?

1 Thessalonians 5:8 says, But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Faith and love also protect our hearts. It's interesting to study how faith and love relate to righteousness. Faith works "through love" as it says in **Galatians 5:6** and Abraham's faith, which was shown by his doing what God said to do, was "accounted to him for righteousness" as it says in **Romans 4:3** and **Genesis 26:5**.

So now we know what the breastplate of righteousness is. Paul gives us the command to "take up the whole armor of God" the obvious question is, "How?"

An in-depth concordance study of all the scriptures concerning righteousness reveals that servants of God in the Bible who had righteousness all had it because they followed God's way. Though it may seem a sweeping statement, it is through a continuing and dedicated adherence to both the letter and spirit of God's law that we can defend ourselves with His righteousness. Once we have put on the breastplate of righteousness, we must be sure not to remove it.

Ezekiel 33:13 shows that wearing righteousness is not a one-time event; rather, it requires a lifetime of action. It says, If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done.

One day, the war we're fighting will be over. And when it is, we are promised in Isaiah 32:17, "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever". By faithfully living God's way and staying clear of Satan's, we will find this peace, quietness and assurance, forever.

The third piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6 is **the shoes** of "the preparation of the gospel of peace." What purpose did shoes serve for a Roman soldier? What purpose do these spiritual shoes serve for us?

Paul did not just write about the armor of God, he also wore it. At this time in his life he was able to call upon the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace. He found protection and strength in the knowledge of what God's gospel meant for him and for the others he shared that good news with. His footing was sure and unshakable, and he was prepared to carry the gospel wherever God sent him.

Shoes, like the belt, may initially seem superfluous in a discussion about spiritual



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armor. They're great to have, sure, but aren't they more of a convenience than a necessity? Are they really that important?

Our spiritual shoes matter and we need to make sure we're equipped with them before we get onto the battlefield. Imagine a fully armed soldier. He has his sword, his shield, his helmet, his breastplate and his belt...but his feet are completely bare. The picture probably seems strange, and it should! Just by thinking about it, we can tell something is missing.

But the problem goes beyond just looking odd. A shoeless soldier could run into real trouble in the heat of battle. Unless he is fighting on Astro turf, he is going to encounter some debris. It may be nothing more than twigs and pebbles, but to a bare foot that can cause serious pain, and one of the last things you want to deal with in the middle of a fight is worrying about where you step.

In short, shoes allow us to step freely and without fear while we turn our full attention to the battle at hand. So our shoes represent peace, the gospel of peace.

Matthew 4:23 says, And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Mark 1:14, Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God...

Acts 20:24, But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Romans 10:15, And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

The gospel of the Kingdom, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the Kingdom of God, the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel of peace, these are some of descriptions attached to the word gospel throughout the New Testament.

What does the gospel of peace have to do with shoes? **Romans 10:14-15** says, How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

God's Church is sent to announce the good news of God's Kingdom, which will spread His way of peace around the whole world. Having our shoes on, we are ready to move, to spread these glad tidings to others.

In the apostle Paul's day, he walked countless miles in delivering the good news. Today, transportation and communication have changed, but we must also be constantly ready to do our part to spread the good news.

In spite of all human attempts at peace, it's clear from the daily news reports that this world does not know the road to peace. **Romans 3:17** says, And the way of peace they have not known.

But **1 John 2:6** says, He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Following Christ's steps is the way to real peace. So How do these spiritual shoes help us stand firm?

Jesus said in **John 14:27**, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

The sandals of the Roman soldier "often were fitted with nails, or armed with spikes, to make the hold firm in the ground". God's good news and our mission, our marching orders, to preach it serve as our firm foundation. When we truly allow ourselves to take comfort in the good news promised by God, there is nothing from outside ourselves that can trouble our hearts or give us reason to be afraid. **John 16:33** says, Christ has overcome the world, and so we have nothing to fear from it.

Just as shoes allow us to walk on otherwise painful terrain without fear, so the preparation of the gospel of peace allows us to traverse the otherwise painful trials and tribulations of life without fear, knowing that what awaits is greater than anything we could possibly suffer in this world. **Romans 8:18** says, I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

The Bible makes it clear that, when God's Kingdom is established and the entire world begins to live God's way faithfully, the resulting peace will be universal. There will be no more war or fear, only the worldwide peace that comes from God's way of life.

The fourth piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6 is "**the shield of faith**." How did Roman soldiers use their shields? What purpose does a spiritual shield serve for us?

One of the stories in our bible is the story of Job. Job was a devout man who experienced many tragedies, including the loss of his wealth, health, and family. Job's faith in God's wisdom and purpose remained strong, even when he was suffering.

Job expresses this faith in **Job 13:15**, "Though he slay me, yet will I [still] trust him." In other words, he says, "God, I can't understand what you're doing, but I know you're good, and so even though everything around me is falling apart, I'm still going to trust that you are working out your good plan. Though you slay me, yet will I trust you."

Many people never make it to this stage. They live on the faith of obedience only, making them not only shallow but also judgmental. When something goes wrong in someone else's life, they think, "Well, I wonder what they did wrong?" They think that way because they only know the faith of what they see.

But then God sends them through a "Job chapter." And some people, when this happens, fall away from the faith. But others go on to develop the faith of desperation that strips them of their judgmentalism, causing them to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

How can we have that faith? Taking up the Shield.

Up until now, Paul's description of the armor of God has been limited to items we wear. We put on the belt, the breastplate and the shoes, and they essentially hold themselves up.

The shield is different. Paul tells us that the shield is something we must take up, something we are required to raise. Just strapping it to our arm won't do any good at all if we don't make the effort to hold it aloft and use it.

The Roman shield—the scutum—was not the standard "medieval-esque" shield most picture in their minds upon hearing the word. It was instead a very large, slightly curved rectangular shield featuring at its center a large metal knob, called a boss.

The scutum was an impressive line of defense. Because of its sheer size. Some were three and a half feet tall and almost three feet wide, soldiers were afforded a great deal of protection from enemies. Because of its slight curve, it was able to deflect attacks without transferring the full force of the assault to the man holding the shield. Because of its boss, it was able to deflect even the more vicious blows and function in a limited offensive capacity as a means of knocking an opponent backwards.

So what is faith? **Hebrews 11:1** says, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Here is a biblical definition of faith that clears up some common misconceptions. If faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," then this has far-reaching implications. Substance is tangible, and evidence is solid proof. Faith is, by definition, not some hazy emotion without any grounding in reality. It is the irrefutable truth. It is real.

Romans 8:24-25, For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Though it is based on solid evidence, that doesn't mean faith comes naturally or easily. Paul here makes the obvious but necessary point. You don't hope for what you already have. Faith involves a huge element of trust. We must examine the evidence and see that God has proved Himself to be unchanging and consistent, and then we must firmly believe that He will fulfill His promises to us.



A shield deflects. Satan is always hurling his fiery darts of fear, doubt and worry in our direction, but the only time they can hit us is when we let our shield of faith down, when we stop believing that God is in control, that He is working everything out for our good, that whatever happens is for the ultimate best of everyone involved, however little it seems to be that way.

A shield is the first line of defense. While the rest of our armor helps protect us from Satan's onslaught, it is not what you ideally want to be using to absorb every hit. You do not, for instance, go out into battle intentionally blocking everything with your head.

When our faith in God's omnipotence and care is strong, it is impossible for Satan to break through our shield and land an attack. But when we allow doubt to creep in, as Peter did when distracted by the waves, we will start to sink. The rest of our armor will be battered, and so will we. But an actively raised shield of faith prevents this otherwise inhibiting fatigue.

We must remember as we fight that this is not simply our battle. This is the battle of all our brethren, both near and around the world. And if we are to win, it will only be once we put our faith in God and stand side by side, contending earnestly and as one for "our common salvation...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints", **Jude 1:3**.

The next item on the list from Ephesians 6, Paul talks about the "**helmet of salvation**" as part of the armor of God. What exactly does the Bible mean by salvation, and why is it portrayed as a helmet?

It's incredible to think that the absence or presence of a helmet can make so much of a difference that a motorcycle accident can prove fatal without one, but someone could survive with one. One of the pieces of our spiritual armor is the helmet of salvation, and, as we will see, a helmet is not a piece of equipment to be underestimated.



When Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the helmet of salvation, some of them may have found the analogy to be a familiar one. In the book of **Isaiah 59:17**, a description of God shows Him as having put on both the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. In referencing this Old Testament scripture, Paul drives home the point that it is in every sense of the word the armor of God, the same armor He Himself wears. But it also leads us to consider what salvation is, what it has to do with a helmet and what it means for us.

The Roman helmet, like helmets today, protected the head from the attacks of the enemy. There is some evidence to suggest that the Romans had special ceremonial helmets used in parades that denoted rank and standing.

Salvation basically means to be saved or delivered from something. In the New Testament, as we will see, it is generally used to refer to deliverance from the eternal death penalty of sin and deliverance into God's Kingdom.

Romans 6:23 says, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:8-10, But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

John 3:16-17, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

1 Timothy 2:3-4, For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Luke 1:77, To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins...

Every human being has thought and acted in ways that are abominable to God. Our sins break God's laws designed for our good. Sin is so vile to God that it requires the death penalty. God's justice requires that penalty. But God's loving mercy provided the most incredible substitute. Jesus Christ, our Creator, was willing to die in our place! To be saved, we need a Savior.

Acts 2:38 says, Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

And then Paul said in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

It is important to understand that salvation cannot be earned. It is a gift from God and not something we can obtain through the right actions, thus obligating God to give it to us. Still, repentance, faith, accepting Christ's sacrifice and coming to the knowledge of the truth are all steps in accepting the free gift. In no way do these efforts make up for our sins that caused the death of our Creator and Savior!

What does salvation have to do with a helmet?

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11, But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether

we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

We can receive tremendous hope and comfort by focusing on the incredible sacrifice Christ gave to save us and the amazing Kingdom that is the goal of our salvation. This hope works like a helmet to protect our minds from the discouragement and despair in this world.

John 17:15-16 says, I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Christians have been called out of this world. Though we remain in it, we are not of it and remain separate from it. Our way of living and even of thinking should differ from the world's. We are to develop the mind of Christ as it says in Philippians 2:5, and as we have seen, that means having God's laws written on our hearts and minds so we can remember to always obey God.

Our enemy hates that we have chosen this path and will stop at nothing to destroy us because of it. Just as the helmet protects the vital but vulnerable head from otherwise fatal blows, the hope of salvation can protect our thoughts from our enemy's attacks and temptations to disobey God.

1 Peter 5:8-9, Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Without the helmet of salvation, we will be unprotected from the "cares of this world" that bombard our thoughts and feelings. Imagine not knowing what the future ultimately holds. The worries and problems produced by living in this world would overwhelm us!

We must keep the helmet securely fastened, so we can have the same confidence that Paul did that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" from **Romans 8:18**. No matter what trials we face, we know that at the end of it all waits God's Kingdom and an eternity of His perfect reign and what could be better than that?

This is the salvation we are fighting for, to enter this glorious Kingdom! Never lose sight of this. This coming Kingdom, with its worldwide peace and prosperity, makes every price in this life worth paying. No matter what comes, no matter how vicious the attacks our enemy lands on us, we know that as long as we remain with God, we are moving slowly but unstoppably toward an eternal victory. What wouldn't we give for that?

Paul had the vision. He valued his salvation highly and diligently fought the good fight. As the end of his life drew near, he was able to say with complete confidence that he would receive the crown.

The sixth piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6 is "**the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**" How does a Roman soldier's sword help us understand how to use the Bible to win our spiritual battles?

Throughout the world, there are certain individuals, real and fictional, whose identity remains almost inseparable from their weapon of choice. From England, there is King Arthur and his sword, Excalibur.

From the Middle East, Ali and his scimitar, Zulfiqar. From Spain, El Cid and his long sword, Tizona. From Scotland, William Wallace and his unnamed claymore.

The sword is the only item listed by Paul that serves in an offensive capacity. Even if we have all the rest of the armor equipped perfectly, without our sword, we amount to little more than heavily armored moving targets.

Perhaps this is why we remember the name of King Arthur's sword and not, for example, his footwear. While the rest of the armor is undoubtedly vital, it is the sword and only the sword that allows us to attack, to directly do the work that needs to be done.

The Roman gladius has become known as "the sword that conquered the world."

Adapted from a Spanish design, the prowess of the gladius in close range combat made it a fearsome tool in the hand of a skilled Roman warrior. When sharpened, its dual edges wreaked havoc on unarmored foes, while its tapered point could pierce through even heavy metal armor.

A Roman infantryman would go into battle armed with more than just his gladius. He would also have a dagger, several one-time use spears and lead-weighted darts, but the sword was his main means of attack. The sword is the only weapon Paul lists as part of the Christian arsenal.



God's Word, the Holy Bible, illuminates. It reveals to us the good and the bad, the wise and the unwise. It is the ultimate tool in learning how to live the best possible life, free from the restraints of stumbling in darkness. **Psalm 119:105** says, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Even Jesus said in **John 17:17**, Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. God's Word is truth, plain and simple. We can have perfect confidence in the fact that His words are accurate, true and unerring. When followed, they guide us without fail in the paths that we need to walk.

Hosea 4:6 says, We can be destroyed by lack of the knowledge of God, but we will be blessed if we hear and keep the Word of God as it says in **Luke 11:28**. And the knowledge is not just for us. **1 Peter 3:15** says, We are to be ready to answer others who ask us.

Why is the word described as a sword? **Hebrews 4:12**, For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The all-powerful sword of the living God is able to cut through every defense our enemy can raise, down to the very division of bone and marrow. When wielded by a servant of God, nothing can withstand its ability to cut straight to the core of a matter and uncover the truth.

As soldiers in God's army, it is our responsibility and duty to use His Word to discern the truth and then follow it. When God's Word shows us something wrong in ourselves, we can use this spiritual weapon to "surgically" remove the offending thoughts and actions.

Unlike all other pieces of the armor of God, which are solely defensive, the sword is uniquely suited for both defensive and offensive roles. A solid defense is invaluable, but the sword is the only way we can complete the work we have been given to do.

Notice that Jesus Christ used the Bible to counter Satan's attacks in **Matthew 4:4, 7, 10**, when he was tempted in the wilderness. We must also learn to live "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God".

Paul only lists one weapon because we only need one weapon, There is no enemy the Word of God, coupled with His Spirit, cannot defeat. And so, armed only with our sword, we step out to fight our enemies head-on. The struggle is real. It is immediate, and it is in front of us. Our future in God's Kingdom is on the line, and we take up the battle so that we may hold fast to the future He has promised us.

What promises can we stand on? **Matthew 24:13**, But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And **Romans 8:31**, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

We fight knowing the end of the story. Two of the many powerful and sure promises in God's Word tell us that if we remain dedicated to God and His Word, we *will* make it to the end, and we *will* be saved. There is no doubt in this statement. God's promises are as sure as the one He told Isaiah in **Isaiah 46:11**: "Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it".

Once you're fully equipped with all this spiritual armor of Ephesians 6, what are you to do? Just stand there? No! You get into the fight!

How do you get into the fight? **Ephesians 6:18** says, 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 Lord's people.

You've been girded for the battle, now go to it! So take up your sword. The battle is ours.

Here is the Battle Scenario. The scene of the spiritual conflict is right here on the earth. The purpose of the conflict is the control of the earth and the individual lives upon it. The earth rightfully belongs to Jesus Christ. He created it and gave it to man. But man forfeited it to Satan. Jesus came and purchased it back for Himself. He redeemed us and the world through His blood at Calvary. For a while as Jesus hung on the cross, Satan thought he was the victor. But on the third day Jesus rose again, triumphing over death, hell, the grave, and Satan.

John tells us in **1 John 3:8** that Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. This He did through His death on the cross. He conquered Satan's forces, spoiled the principalities and powers that were against us, nailed them to His cross, triumphed over them, and made an open display of His victory. Though the world rightfully belongs to Jesus Christ now, Satan seeks to maintain control and power over it by force.

Much as when God had rejected King Saul from reigning over Israel and had the prophet Samuel anoint David in his stead, Saul, by force, tried to hold on to that which was no longer rightfully his, and sought to drive David from the kingdom. So Satan seeks to hold on to that which is no longer rightfully his.

Jesus Christ also has a method of winning the world, but not by force. Jesus seeks to draw men unto Himself and into His kingdom through love. Thus, the warfare continues in this world for the control of lives. Satan applies tremendous force and pressure to keep people in his camp. Jesus, wooing and drawing through gentle love, seeks to persuade men to submit their lives to Him.

As you enter into intercessory prayer, you rush into the thick of the battle. It becomes work because you're engaged against the forces of darkness and hell. You're going against the enemy's strongholds with prayer. You witness the grip of power that Satan has on the lives of those around you. Through prayer you can advance with the battering ram and demolish the strongholds the enemy has on those individual lives, freeing them from the power that holds them captive.

This kind of prayer, the warfare praying in the Spirit, becomes real work. You begin to understand what Paul meant when he said that Epaphras was "laboring fervently" in prayer. But it's glorious to realize that prayer is the deciding factor in this spiritual warfare. Satan is a very stubborn enemy and an obstinate fighter. He yields only what and when he must. Therefore, your prayers must be very specific.

Vague, general prayers like "God, save the world" won't even dent the enemy. But when you bring before the Lord an individual life and lay claim to that person for Jesus Christ, you begin to be specific in prayer, Satan must yield.

For Example, Something like this:

"Lord, my friend, _____, is bound by the power of Satan. His life is being ruined and twisted. I come against that work of Satan in the name of Jesus Christ and in the victory of the cross of Jesus Christ. I ask you, Father, to free him from this power of Satan that's holding him today. Loose him now, that he may know the love of Jesus Christ. Lord, let your Spirit speak to his heart and bring an end to the work of Satan that's binding him, and blinding him."

We thus recover them from the snare of the devil that is holding them as captives. Realize that Satan is persistent. Even after you begin to see a bit of victory, you must continue in prayer to hold the ground that you've gained. The minute you win ground, Satan will turn right around and counterattack to regain it. Your prayers must be persistent. The ground we have taken from the enemy through prayer, must be held by prayer. Many times we make a serious mistake when we begin seeing signs of victory in the life of one for whom we have been interceding. Maybe they have gone forward to receive Christ and have started to read their Bibles, so we quit praying for them.

Often the seed has not had a chance to take root yet and the enemy comes to take away the seed. We need to continue to pray long after we begin to see initial signs of victory.

The beautiful truth is that Satan has already been defeated. As we go into battle the outcome has already been determined. Jesus triumphed over Satan and, thus, Satan must yield when we come against him in the power and in the authority of Jesus Christ. Lay claim to the victory in Jesus Christ and life after life will be set free as you come against the strongholds of Satan and tear them down with this powerful weapon of prayer!

God has made prayer available to the weakest of His children. It's something that every Christian can exercise, regardless of his spiritual state. You don't have to be a spiritual giant to get into spiritual warfare. And you don't have to be afraid of the enemy as you enter in, because he's already been defeated.

Satan knows that prayer spells his defeat. He'll fight you more to keep you from prayer than any other thing you do. Sometimes, he even encourages you to other specific activities because he knows how fruitless they are. You'll be amazed at the disturbances that come your way when you kneel down and start praying. The telephone will ring. Or someone will be at the front door. Or you'll suddenly remember something you've been wanting to do. Satan will do anything to get you away from prayer.

Intercessory prayer is a real labor. It's a real conflict in the battle against Satan. It's the deciding factor, and that's why Satan fights it so hard.

Suppose that someone attacked you on a dark street and started wrestling with you. If he were to pull a knife, the whole battle would suddenly be centered on one thing, control of the knife. All of a sudden, you'd forget about punching him in the nose. You'd be grabbing for his wrist and trying to knock that knife out of his hand for you realize that it is the deciding factor in this battle.

Satan knows that prayer brings you victory and spells his defeat. He knows it's the deciding factor in this spiritual warfare. That's why he concentrates all his efforts against prayer. He'll do all he can to upset your prayer time, and keep you from praying.

If the answers to your prayers don't come immediately, Persistence, don't give up! Paul speaks of Epaphras "laboring fervently" in prayer for the Colossians 4:12. I don't believe that Epaphras said, "O Lord, bless the Church in Colosse, in Jesus' name. Amen." Rather, he waited upon God, diligently sought after God for the welfare and the benefit of that church, and continued the practice of prayer day after day. **James 5:16** speaks of effective fervent prayer availing much.

Many times we give up a little bit too soon. Whenever Satan begins losing his grip he makes a last, desperate lunge. This is when we all too often become tired and give up, quitting just short of victory.

I read a story about a man name Mr. Darby, a wealthy insurance broker from the East, was caught up with gold fever and headed out to Colorado. He did some prospecting and discovered a very rich vein of gold in the Rockies. He returned to the East and convinced all his friends to invest their money in a mining venture. They formed a corporation, bought a great deal of equipment, and mined this very wealthy vein of gold ore in Colorado.

About the time that the corporation paid off all its debts, the vein of gold ran out. The investors kept digging until they ran themselves into debt again. Finally one day, a discouraged Mr. Darby ordered an

end to the digging. He closed the mine, went into Denver, and sold the mine and equipment to a junk dealer for a few hundred dollars. Mr. Darby headed back home.

The junk dealer hired a geologist to study the mine and the area. The geologist came back with a report: "If you'll dig three feet past the point where Mr. Darby quit, you'll find that same vein of gold." The junk dealer became the wealthiest mine owner in the state of Colorado.

Just three more feet! I wonder how many times we, too, stop three feet short of victory.

There are many fantastic promises given to us about prayer through Jesus Christ. Claim Those Promises. **Matthew 18:18-20** says, Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

The number in prayer: any two of you. The place of prayer: on earth. The scope of prayer: any thing. "It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." That is a broad and glorious promise!

Jesus also promised in **Mark 11:22-24**, "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

What a fantastic promise! Also, Jesus said in **John 14:13-14**, And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Any thing!

Another promise Jesus made is in **John 15:7**, If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. Also **John 16:23-24**, In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Here the Lord is begging you to ask Him anything and He said He will do it. These are extremely broad promises to prayer. But to whom were the promises made? Jesus wasn't talking here to the multitudes. In every case Jesus was talking to His disciples. Who qualifies as a disciple? Jesus said in **Matthew 16:24**, Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

A person who has denied himself, taken up the cross, and is following Jesus Christ can take these promises and lay claim to them. Anything he asks, desires, or wishes will be done. But, by the very virtue of the fact that a disciple has denied himself, he is not seeking the things that would glorify his flesh. The very fact that he's taken up his cross, he's not seeking his own glory but reckoning himself to be dead with Christ. He is now identified only in the things that God wants, committing himself, his ambitions, and his life totally to Jesus Christ. The true thrust of prayer is always, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but Thy will be done."

Only by denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus Christ do you receive access to the powerful promises of God regarding your prayers.

What about when the Answer Is No!

The Lord may not give us what we ask when He has a higher purpose in mind for our lives. Moses prayed that God would allow him to go into the Promised Land. God said, "No, Moses. For the sake of the people you can't go into the land. You misrepresented Me before those people. Now they must learn the lesson of obedience." Moses, that mighty spiritual giant who communed face to face with God, wasn't allowed to go into the Promised Land, from **Numbers 20:7-12**.

Throughout the centuries since then, parents have told their children the story of Moses, the man of God, who was used by God to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt and bring them to their own land. They tell of Moses who went up into the mountain and received the law of God in the midst of the fire and rolling thunder; whose face shone so that he had to cover himself with a veil; who stretched forth the rod and the Red Sea parted. Then with whispered tones they would say to their children, "But Moses could not go into the land because he disobeyed God." In order to teach the future generations of the nation of Israel the lesson of the importance of complete obedience, God did not answer Moses' prayer.

Also I think of Paul's thorn in the flesh. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** He said, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." But God didn't deliver him. Why? God had given Paul an abundance of revelations, and that thorn in the flesh was necessary to keep him humbled. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Actually, Paul learned to rejoice over that rotten thorn, because he experienced the mighty power of God as a result of the infirmity.

Consider the prayer of Jesus that wasn't answered. Matthew 26:39, Though He prayed three times, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But He drank the cup. Why? Because God wanted to bring salvation to each one of us. It should be noted that Jesus, though offering His prayer to the Father, added what is so important to every prayer: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

That is the key to obedience and prayer. "Lord, here's what I want. Here's my desire. Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done." You can't improve on that! For the real purpose of prayer is never to get my will done, but His.

Let's talk about Ineffective Prayers for a moment. Why are many prayers ineffective, they seemingly, produce nothing. They go up and yet they bring nothing down.

God does answer prayer. That's the inspiration behind all prayer, for if God never answered prayer, no one would be praying anymore. But why have so many prayers been offered without achieving any results?

Certain things can actually hinder your prayers from being effective. First of all, if you harbor sin within your life your prayers are hindered. Isaiah 59:1-2 declared, The LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God.

So many times when my prayers aren't answered I want to blame God. In reality, the fault is mine. There's sin at my door. David said that if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord does not hear me when I pray, in **Psalm 66:18**.

Sin, as Isaiah said, breaks your connection with God. It's like cutting the telephone cord. You may dial the number all you want. You may speak in eloquent and very persuasive terms. Yet, you've cut the cord. The message is simply going into the ground and not getting anywhere. At that point prayer becomes deceptive.

Many people say, "I know I'm not living as I should be, but I still pray." But their prayers are of no value. Their relationship with God has been severed because of the sin within their lives. Their sins have separated between them and their God.

Another cause for ineffective prayers is an **unforgiving spirit**. Jesus taught so much about forgiveness. When He gave us the model prayer in **Matthew 6:15** He emphasized one point at the end. If you won't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your trespasses.

It's important to forgive, for you cannot come to God harboring a grudge against a brother without hindering your own prayers to God. Key word, Brother, another believer.

Ineffective prayers can also be a result of selfish motivation. **James 4:2** says, You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

It's true that in many cases you just haven't prayed. Many times a person will pour out their horrible tale of woe to me. I'll ask, "Have you prayed?" "Well, no." But that's where you start! You have not because you ask not.

Then James went on to say in **James 4:3**, When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Behind so many prayers are selfish desires. So many of our prayers are self-oriented. As I mentioned earlier, there are needs that I have and God wants to supply them. I should pray for them, but I must be careful lest all my prayers have only self as the underlying motive.

Here are a few rules for prayer that I have found to be effective. First of all, make the will of God your prayer. How? Discover the will of God through the Word of God. God has declared to you His will, purpose, and plan in the Bible. Give place to the Scriptures in your prayers. Too many times prayer is only a monologue and you're doing all the talking. But that isn't communion. Communion is a dialogue, talking and listening while God speaks to you in His Word.

Tell God your needs and the needs of others around you. Express to Him what you see, what you feel, and what you desire. Then turn to the Word, and God will speak to you. He'll minister to you and show you His will and plan for your life. Then come again to Him: "Well, Lord, here it is in Your Word. I can see this is what You desire so I claim it in the name of Jesus Christ.

Listen and learn to hear the voice of God as He speaks to you by His Spirit. Prayer is to be addressed to the Father, in the authority of the name of Jesus. Actually, you have no right to an audience with God

on your own. There's no way you can earn such a privilege. The only way you can have an audience with the Father is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in **John 14:6**, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Ask the Father for your needs, but ask Him in the name of Jesus Christ. It's through Jesus Christ that you have the right to come, that you have a hearing, and are received. When you knock, use the name of Jesus. If I knock on His door and say, "Father, it's JD here, wanting to talk to you." He is apt to respond, "Who's JD, what right do you have to knock on My door?" But if when I knock I say, "Father, this is JD and I come in the name of Jesus." The response will be, "Come on in JD, good to hear from you."

More victories are wrought through prayer than any other means. It's shocking that, though God has given us such a powerful weapon, we are defeated again and again. The problem is, though we possess the weapon we seldom use it. As Christians, we're so often trying to defend our weapons.

For instance, when people argue against the Bible, we begin to defend it. The Bible is a great weapon, a sharp two-edged sword. Don't defend it, use it! If you're in a duel, you don't say: "You had better watch out, this sword has the sharpest steel in town. It's been honed to a super-fine edge." You don't defend your sword. You use your sword! Likewise, we're always talking about our weapon of prayer. Don't talk about prayer. Pray. Use the weapons that God has given you and triumph over the enemy!

Let's talk about The Purpose of Prayer.

In Christianity, the purpose of prayer is, essentially creating a personal connection with the divine through a dialogue of worship and reliance on God's will. It is seen as a way to deepen one's relationship with God and seek guidance, strength, and comfort from Him.

To understand the purpose of prayer, it is important to first understand what prayer is not. There are many wrong views in the world and culture about prayer, even among Christians, and these should be addressed first. Prayer is not bargaining with God. It is not making demands of God or only asking God for things. It is surely not a therapeutic, meditation-type exercise. It not a way to show off one's spirituality before others. It is not a substitute for taking personal responsibility. And for sure it is not a one-sided conversation without listening to God.

Many people believe that prayer is only about asking God for things. Although supplication is a part of prayer as it says in **Philippians 4:6**, it is not the sole purpose of prayer. Praying for the needs of ourselves and others is needed and beneficial, but there is so much more to prayer. God is not a magical genie who answers our every wish, nor is He a weak God who can be controlled by our prayers.

The best way to learn about the purpose of prayer is studying the example of Jesus during His earthly ministry. Jesus prayed for Himself and for others, and He prayed to commune with the Father. John 17 is a great place to see Jesus' use of prayer. He not only prays that the Father be glorified but also prays for His disciples and "for those who will believe in me through their message."

Submitting to the Father's will was another aspect to Jesus' prayer life, highlighted in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane from Matthew 26:39, Yet not as I will, but as you will. With any request we have, we must submit to God's will.

In addition to interceding for others, prayer is also a way to strengthen our relationship with God. Jesus set the example, as He prayed to the Father throughout His earthly ministry. Those in relationships will naturally seek to communicate with each other, and prayer is our communication with God. Other good examples in the Bible of those who spent time in prayer are David, Hezekiah, and Paul.

Ultimately, the main purpose of prayer is worship. When we pray to the Lord, recognizing Him for who He is and what He has done, it is an act of worship. There are many examples of prayer being an act of worship in the Bible. Some are, **2 Kings 19:15**, **1 Chronicles 17:20**, **Psalms 86:12–13**, **John 12:28**, and **Romans 11:33–36**. How we pray should reflect this purpose, our focus should be on who God is, not on ourselves.

Prayers un-prayed will be prayers unanswered. If the Syrian woman with the demon influenced daughter had not prayed to Christ, her daughter would not have been made whole in **Mark 7:26–30**. If the blind man outside Jericho had not called out to Christ, he would have remained blind in **Luke 18:35–43**. In one sense, prayer is like sharing the gospel with people. We do not know who will respond to the message of the gospel until we share it. In the same way, we will never see the results of answered prayer unless we pray.

But a lack of prayer demonstrates a lack of faith and a lack of trust in God's Word. We pray to demonstrate our faith in God, that He will do as He has promised in His Word and bless our lives abundantly more than we could ask or hope for. Prayer is our primary means of seeing God work in others' lives. Because it is our means of "plugging into" God's power, it is our means of defeating Satan and his army that we are powerless to overcome by ourselves. Therefore, may God find us often before His throne, for we have a high priest in heaven who can identify with all that we go through. We have His promise that the fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much in **James 5:16-18**.

But we are going a lot deeper than that. The primary purpose of prayer is not to change circumstances; the primary purpose of prayer is to change us! But either way, the chief objective remains the same: to glorify God in any and every situation.

We're often so anxious to get out of difficult, painful, or challenging situations that we fail to grow through them. We're so fixated on getting out of them that we don't get anything out of them. We fail to learn the lessons God is trying to teach us or cultivate the character God is trying to grow in us. We're so focused on God changing our circumstances that we never allow God to change us! So instead of ten or twenty years of experience, we have one year of experience repeated ten or twenty times.

Sometimes we need to pray "get me out" prayers. But sometimes we need to pray "get me through" prayers. And we need the discernment to know when to pray what.

If we're being completely honest, most of our prayers have as their chief objective our own personal comfort rather than God's glory. We want to pray away every problem, but those shortsighted prayers would short-circuit God's perfect plan. There are seasons and situations when we need to simply pray through.

Can our prayers change our circumstances? Absolutely! But when our circumstances don't change, it's often an indication that God is trying to change us. The primary purpose of prayer is not to change circumstances, the primary purpose of prayer is to change us! But either way, the chief objective remains the same: to glorify God in any and every situation.

Paul said in **Colossians 4:2**, Continue in prayer. The Greek word for "continue" speaks of persistence and constancy. He is saying continue steadfastly in prayer. Why is persistence necessary in prayer?

Some people say that praying for the same need more than once shows a lack of faith on our part. Yet, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed the same prayer three times in **Matthew 26:39-44**. Also, in speaking of his own thorn in the flesh, Paul the apostle said in **2 Corinthians 12:8**, Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Even Jesus taught persistence in prayer in two parables. In the first one in Luke 18:1 He said, Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. He then illustrated this by the story of a callous judge and a determined widow. The widow visited the judge every day saying, "Avenge me of mine adversary." The judge, even though he did not fear God or man, said, "This woman will drive me crazy by coming here every day!" So, he wrote out his judgment in her favor.

Then in **Luke 18:2-8** Jesus added, "Shall not God avenge his own elect? I tell you that he shall avenge them speedily". At first I found difficulty with the fact that Jesus used an unjust judge as a comparison with our just God. But the parable actually shows a vast contrast. If an unjust judge could be persuaded to act by the persistence of a woman, how much more will our fair and loving Father bring about a just and speedy judgment for those who are calling upon Him.

The other parable about persistence in prayer come from **Luke 11:5-10** and concerns a fellow who heard a knock on his door at midnight. He opened the door to find some of his friends had come to spend the night. Wanting to feed them before he bedded them down, he went to the cupboard but found he didn't have enough bread. So, he went to his neighbor's house, knocked on the door, and said, "Open up and give me some bread! I've got company." The neighbor replied, "I'm already in bed with my wife and children. Come back tomorrow." But the fellow kept knocking and wouldn't stop until he had what he needed. Because of this man's importunity, the neighbor finally got up and gave him the bread.

So we see that the Bible teaches persistence in prayer. Does that mean our prayers persuade God to do things our way? Does God have an arbitrary reluctance to answer us, and we make Him give in to our demands by being persistent and obnoxious? I don't think so!

I am convinced that prayers do not and cannot change the purposes of God, though you pray fervently, though you petition with tears, though you pray for days. God is far too loving to give in just because you are weeping and persevering for something He knows would be detrimental to you and would destroy you in the end.

Prayer doesn't change the purpose of God, but prayer can change the action of God. Jesus said in **Matthew 6:8**, Your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him. Your prayers aren't informing God of your situation. He knows all your needs before you ever ask Him. But your prayers open the door and allow God the opportunity to do those things that He's been desiring to do, but wouldn't do in violation of your own free will.

In **John 15:16**, Jesus said to His disciples, You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

Note, He may give it to you. God knows your needs and desires to meet them. Prayer opens the door to allow Him to do those things He desires to do. It is giving God my consent to do what He desires in my life. God has given me a free will and will not violate my free will. Thus, I must ask in order to receive.

I mean, God knows that in one year I will need a particular thing, because He knows all my exact needs in advance. I don't know my needs even a month from now. If God gave me today what I'll need in a year, then I might not use it as He intends it to be used. So, as I become aware of my needs, I cry out to God, "Help me and meet this need now." I have finally become aware of the problem. But God has been aware of it all the time. Now when I ask Him for help, He is free to give it to me because I'll use it as He wants it to be used.

In other words everything happens in God's Timing. And sometimes our prayers are answered almost as quickly as they're spoken.

In **Genesis 24:1-20**, Eliezer the servant was sent by Abraham on a special mission, to find a wife for Isaac. As he came to a certain well, Eliezer said, "Lord, let a young virgin come here to draw water and when I say to her, 'Give me a drink.' Let her answer, 'Not only will I give you a drink, but I'll also draw water for your camels.' And Lord, let her be the one you have chosen as a bride for Isaac."

While the servant was yet praying in his heart, a young girl came to the well to draw water. He said to her, "Give me a drink." She quickly let the water jug down from her head, gave him a drink, and then said, "Not only thee but I will also draw for thy camels." And she drew water for the camels.

This is one of those beautiful, instantaneous answers to prayer that always thrills us. No sooner do the prayers escape the heart than God is answering them. It is also true that we have prayed many years for certain needs and have not seen the answer. Why is it that some prayers are answered immediately and others seem to be delayed? We pray for some people and they're healed. We pray for others and they die.

First of all, this demonstrates that we're not in control of the situation. God is in control and He does according to His own purpose and will. Prayers should never be thought of as changing the purposes of God. We have a very wrong concept of prayer when we think of it as changing God's mind, altering God's purposes, or getting my will done. The true purpose of prayer is to get God's will done. To open the door for God to accomplish that which He has purposed to do. So, we are led to the conclusion that true prayer begins in the heart of God. God makes known to me what is His purpose, His desire, His wishes. I offer it back to God in prayer, and the cycle is completed.

When I pray in this manner, I am in harmony with God's will. In **1 John 5:14-15** we read, 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.

Actually, I am the one often changed by prayer. Many times as I am praying God will speak to me. He will show me His way and His plan, which is always so much better than what I had in mind. While in prayer, God deals with me and shows me the folly of certain things that I have been insisting, and practically demanding, from Him. I respond, "Thank you, Lord, for not answering me during the last five years." He knew what was best for me all the time!

At this point in my life, as I look back, I am as thankful for the prayers He did not answer as those He did. God has a plan for this earth, and He has chosen human instruments to do His work. Some people say that God can only work through man. That's not true. God has chosen to use man. God could work in any way He wants. He is not limited by human instruments. If we fail, God isn't going to fail. At times in history God has used angels to do His work on earth, such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We must not lay the heavy responsibility of thwarting God's purpose on any person.

We sometimes hear people say, If you fail to help in the purposes of God, the program of God is going to fail, and you'll be responsible! You'll have to stand before God and answer for that failure!

Hog wash! That isn't true. God will accomplish His purpose one way or another. He doesn't need my help in any way. But by choosing to use you to do His will, God is giving you the blessed opportunity of knowing the joy of working together with Him. Then, as results begin to take place, He rewards you as though you did the work! When you get to heaven you'll be rewarded for those accomplishments, even though it was God who did the whole thing!

When the survival of the Jewish race was being threatened by a cruel edict facilitated by Haman the Agagite in **Esther 4:14**, Mordecai told Esther, "If you at this point hold your peace, deliverance will come from another quarter. But you'll be destroyed. He was warning her that when they try to wipe out the Jews, she would not escape the edict, even though she was in the palace.

Likewise, when you fail to do God's will, deliverance will come from another quarter. You'll lose the blessing and the reward of being a co-laborer with God, but God's program and purpose will not fail.

God Wants to Bless You. 2 Chronicles tells us of King Asa's relationship with the Lord. When he first came to the throne, the King was faced with a very difficult situation, the Ethiopians were encamped around his people. King Asa cried out to God it says in 2 **Chronicles 14:11**, LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. LORD, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.

He knew the odds against him surviving meant nothing to God. If God be for us, who can be against us? God and you make a majority. The Lord was with Asa, and the king went out and destroyed the Ethiopian armies. When King Asa returned from victory the prophet Azariah met him and said, "The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." **2 Chronicles 15:2**.

Asa began to prosper and he became very strong and powerful. In the later years of his reign he was threatened again. But this time, the threat came from Baasha, the king of the northern tribes of Israel, who was building fortified cities north of Jerusalem in preparation for an invasion. King Asa took money out of the treasury and sent it to hire Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, to invade Israel from the north. This caused Baasha to withdraw his troops from invading Judah and to deploy them to defend the northern border. It was a clever and successful strategy that worked.

However, rather than seeking the Lord in prayer, he sought human help. The prophet Hanani came to him and rebuked him for seeking the aid of man rather than the help of God. The prophet reminded him of how the Lord had helped him against the Ethiopians at the beginning of his reign, and he declared in **2 Chronicles 16:9**, For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.

Here the Bible is declaring one of the basic truths of God. He is looking for people to bless. God wants to work in your life and bless you. He wants to use you as one of His channels, as one of His instruments. We become just a tool in God's tool box. But He's waiting for you to come into alignment with His plan. The moment your life comes into harmony with the purposes of God, you become a channel through which God's power and love can flow to a needy world. God is looking for people whose hearts are in tune with His desires.

Thus, the greatest prayer is "Lord, bring me into harmony with your will." You can't improve on that. But it has to be more than just lip service. It must come from the heart. And that's not easy. There are so many things I want done, and so many of my prayers reflect selfishness. So many of my petitions are for things that would bring me comfort, ease, and happiness. But the real purpose of prayer is to see the work of God accomplished in my life and then, through my life, in the lives of others.

I believe that God intends to give you many of the things you pray for, but His timing is different than

yours. Many times God delays the answers to your prayers for a very good reason. One reason God may delay an answer to your prayer is that He desires to give you more than what you were asking for at the moment..

Hannah is a good example of this in **1 Samuel 1**. She had been barren for years. Her husband had another wife with many children. Day after day Hannah's barrenness plagued her. One day Hannah and her husband were traveling to the tabernacle while the other wife stayed at home with the kids. On their journey to Shiloh her husband asked, "Hannah, why are you so sad?" Hannah replied, "Give me children." He responded, "Am I God that I could give you children? Aren't I better to you than many sons? Aren't you satisfied with me?"

When Hannah arrived at the tabernacle the agony of her heart was so great that she couldn't even utter her request. She felt the grief so deeply that she just lay before God in the court of the tabernacle. Her lips were moving but she made no sound with her voice. Eli the priest passed by and saw Hannah prostrate before the Lord. He thought she was drunk and ordered her to stay away from wine. Hannah said, "No, I am not drunk. But the handmaiden of the Lord is grieved because she is barren. I've been pleading with God to give me a son. If He will give me a son, I have promised to give him back to God all the days of his life."

That's what God wanted to hear from Hannah, because God needed a man. The state of the nation Israel was so corrupt that there wasn't a man around for God to use. Before God could get a man, He had to get a woman. Therefore, He dealt with Hannah's heart. Hannah had been praying for a son for many years, a son for her own joy and pleasure, a son that would put an end to the taunts from the other wife. Hannah had prayed, "Lord, give me a son. Take away the shame."

But finally she prayed, "Lord, give me a son. And I'll give him back to You all the days of his life." Hannah had finally come into harmony with the purposes of God. The priest told her, "Go in peace. The Lord has heard your prayer. You will have a son." Hannah went home and God gave her a son, Samuel. He became a prophet, a priest, and one of the most outstanding leaders of God's people in the Old Testament.

Yes, God wanted to give Hannah a son all the while. But He delayed the answer to her prayers, so that He might work in her heart until she would be aligned with His purpose. Do not get discouraged when God delays the answers to your prayers. He may want to give you so much more than what you've been asking for. God knows the right time to answer our prayers. In **Acts 1:4-5,8**, Jesus told His disciples to not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And in verse 8, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

After Jesus spoke these things, while His followers were standing with Him on the Mount of Olives in Bethany, He ascended into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. The disciples returned to Jerusalem and continued steadfastly in prayer in one accord. The Bible says that they continued for ten days to wait till the day of Pentecost had fully come.

It would have been possible for God to have poured out the Holy Spirit on them in the first ten minutes, but for His own purposes He saw fit to wait ten days.

How long are you to persist in prayer? Until you get an answer, either a yes or no.

In Colossians Paul exhorts us to "watch," which literally means to "stay awake." Sleepiness is one of the weaknesses of our flesh while we pray. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying from **Matthew 26:40**, He found His disciples asleep. He said, What, could you not watch with me one hour?

God wants our minds to be sharp and alert when we talk to Him. Paul also exhorts us to pray "with thanksgiving" in **Colossians 4:2**.

Our prayers should always be coupled with thanksgiving. The Psalms serve as an ideal example of this. David prayed for everything in the Psalms, for himself, for his friends, and for his enemies. He also filled the Psalms with praises and thanksgiving unto God. They are as well-balanced with thanksgiving as with requests.

Quite often, but not often enough, people come to me and say, The Lord has been so good to me. I want to tell you how He's been blessing my life. That's so exciting! I hear so many problems as a pastor that it's a great joy when someone says, "No problem. I just want to tell you the Lord is so good!" That's glorious!

It's a shame to continually lay some heavy problem on God. We ought to be thanking Him more for what He has already done for us.

Certainly, personal petitions are necessary in our prayers. But if I only pray when I have some desperate need in my own life and only bring personal petitions to God, I'm denying myself a fantastic blessing. Oh, that I would go to God with more praises and thanksgiving!

Paul also exhorts us to pray for pastors in **Colossians 4:3**. May God help the pastors. Often, people place pastors on a pedestal and make us into something we're not. We're all too human. I wish I were more of a saint, but I'm not! Pastors have problems just like everybody else. We go through the same trials, perhaps to an even greater degree than most other Christians. Many times we're under heavier attacks by Satan because of our position of spiritual authority and leadership. Pastors need prayer.

Someone asked Spurgeon about his success. He answered, "My people pray for me." The Apostle Paul said, "Pray for us." But what did Paul want them to pray for him?

Colossians 4:3 says, He wanted to pray that God would open a door of utterance. At this point Paul was in prison. You'd think that he would desire liberty. "Pray that God will open the door of the prison and get me out of this place!" Instead Paul prayed that God would open the door of opportunity to freely speak the word.

Pray that God will help me not to be a powerless pastor, but to be filled with His Spirit. Help me not to speak a lot, and say nothing. Pray that God will help me not to speak only to please and excite the people. Pray that I'll not be an idle, but being thoroughly furnished in the word. Pray that I might be a faithful pastor speaking forth the mysteries of Christ, really demonstrating His love, setting an example before the flock, walking humbly before God as He would have me to do. Pray for your pastors. We covet your prayers. In turn, we'll pray for you.

Next on our list is The Privilege of Prayer.

Have you ever considered what a wonderful privilege it is that God has given to us? Have you ever considered the significance of what God has done by inviting us to come to Him to share anything that is on our hearts and ask anything that is on our mind? How amazing it is that the Almighty living God of heaven has invited us to come to Him and ask. I imagine, though, that many of us miss the significance and are missing out on the opportunity.

I want us to see clearly that God has called us to pray and, while this is a calling, I want us to see it more as an invitation than as a command. He has called us, desires this of us, invites us, and even promises many things in response to our praying, but He doesn't force us. He says, "I am here. The door is open. I am ready to listen. I am even ready to answer. I am inviting you in, just come and ask."

This is what God offered to Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 29:12** saying, "Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you." God further stated in **Jeremiah 33:3**, "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know." This is a divine invitation. God is inviting us to come before Him and ask. What an amazing privilege!

It is important for us to understand the privilege of God's invitation. The text says plainly, "Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace." What a privilege this is! In addition to the divine invitation, however, we must also understand that this is a divine instruction. Why? Because God knows what is best for us.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 instructs us, "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." **Colossians 4:2** directs us to, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." **Philippians 4:6** explains, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." **Romans 12:12** says that we are always to be, "Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer." Prayer is the primary vehicle by which we communicate with God. Regular prayer in our life is so vital to our walk with God that it is mentioned many, many times throughout the Bible.

Clearly prayer is important to God and it should be important in the life of every believer. We know this. This isn't new. This isn't rocket science. But if it's not rocket science, why is it so difficult? Why is it so sparse in the life of the average believer? Why do we tend to only pray at meals and in times of emergency? While we know that prayer is important, do we really understand what it is, how it's done, why it's important, and what place it should have in our everyday lives? Why is it so greatly lacking in the local church? I believe that there are great blessings and great victories missing because we have failed to know and grow in this incredible invitation to pray.

I know that everyone engages in prayer at one time or another. Even that person who says "I don't believe in God," cries out when the crisis looms, "O God, help me!" We are all acquainted with prayer to some extent or another. But Prayer is one of the greatest privileges God has given to man. It amazes

me that I can come into the presence of God, the creator of this universe, and talk with Him. And what's more, He always listen to me!

I'm also amazed that God has given me the privilege of talking with Him at any time. I don't have to make an appointment or call in advance. I can come at any hour, for any need, and open my heart before Him. And God not only listens, He's also promised to help me! He's promised to guide me and to provide for my every need.

I imagine one of the great mysteries among the angels in heaven is that man has been given this glorious privilege of prayer, yet he takes such little advantage of it and treats it in such a peculiar way. Many people treat prayer as a religious work that they must do. After they have prayed for a time, they expect a merit badge for their work. "After all, I prayed a whole hour." As if one should be rewarded for talking to God!

Many people determine to pray an hour a day because it seems like an honorable thing to do. They start the hour of prayer by lifting up every request imaginable. Then, when ten minutes has gone by and they've run out of things to say, they start over again. They go through the list a few more times.

Finally, the hour is over and they feel good. "Praise the Lord! I've spent a whole hour praying." They go their way convinced that they've done their duty and fulfilled their obligation.

Prayer should never be done by the clock. It should never be looked upon as an obligation, a required work, or a duty. It's a Privilege, we should want to do it!

Remember, the length of your prayer isn't important at all. Often, there just isn't enough time for lengthy prayers. For instance, I remember back in around 2000, I was driving home from Graham in my wife's mini van. One of them vehicles you sit up over the front tires.

Well right at the edge of Graham by the Dairy Queen there is this cross road. Speed limit through there is 55 mile per hour. I'm on 380 headed towards Jacksboro, and right upon that cross road that goes south towards fourth street. Just as I entered the area of the cross road, a car turns south off of 380 towards fourth street. I had no time to react to the vehicle. All I could say was, "LORD HELP ME." Both vehicles were totaled but we both, Me and the driver of the other car, walked away. I had a scratch where my glasses dug in when I hit the windshield. The lady in the other car had a bruised knee from hitting the under part of the dash and steering column.

If it would have took a long prayer to do the job, I wouldn't have made it most likely.

Jesus also warned us in **Matthew 6:7**, And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

When you pray you're actually talking to the Father. You should talk to Him intelligently. Don't repeat the same words over and over again like a mantra. It will get you nowhere.

The Christian has one source of power in his life, the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. He is the source of power in your life. However, your greatest outlet of spiritual power is prayer. I can do more for God through prayer than I can through any other means, including service. Scriptures say Prayer binds the strong man of the house, whereas service is going in and taking the spoil. I can do more than pray after I have prayed, but I really can't do more than pray until I have prayed. My service to God, though important, is limited to

one place. Prayer, however, is limitless in its scope. It can reach around the world. Through prayer I can spend one-half hour of my life in India, doing work for the kingdom of God by strengthening the hands of the missionaries. Then I can go to New Mexico and spend some time with my friends who are ministering there. I can help them in their ministry by praying for the effectiveness of the gospel and the words they speak on the reservation. Then I can move into Russia and pray for the church there. I can touch a world for God through prayer right from my own prayer closet.

Jesus said **Matthew 6:5**, When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. The word hypocrite in Greek is hupokrites. The actors in classical Greek drama would wear character masks. These actors were called hupokrites. In other words, Jesus said, "When you pray, don't be as one who merely puts on an act for the benefit of other people. Don't be as the hupokrites who like to pray standing in the synagogues and on street corners to be seen by men.

From this Scripture many people have assumed that public prayer is wrong. That's certainly not what Jesus said. Jesus himself prayed in public. The early Church also gathered together for public prayer. The Bible says in **Acts 2:42**, the believers continued daily in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Prayer is an essential part of our gathering together. But be careful that you're not praying to impress men rather than to communicate to God. This is an especially real danger for ministers, because we pray publicly so often. The real temptation comes at the close of a sermon, when I subtly repeat the major points of my message in the closing prayer to make sure the people understood it. I'm supposedly talking to God, but I'm actually trying to bring my point home to the people one more time.

I've heard quite a few ministers who prayed those long prayers. They use those big words that most do not know the meaning of. Then if the prayer is not long enough they start repeating it with a different tone and few different words.

I have never been impressed with those people and I think they actually forget their talking to the Father who created everything. Not only are they trying to impress people, they seem to be trying to impress the father also. It's like their says, see how much better I am than these others.

There's a real danger in praying to impress people with how righteous, godly, and spiritually deep you think you are. Jesus spoke of two rewards. The first one is given by men. It is given to the person who prays in public with the motivation of impressing people with how spiritual he is. He will be rewarded by someone saying, "Oh, he's so spiritual!" Jesus said he has his reward. The motivation of the Pharisees was just that, to make a display of their spirituality.

On their way to the synagogue they acted as though they were consumed with spiritual zeal. They had to stop on the street corner and say their prayers right there! They were actually saying, "I'm so holy, I can't wait till I get to the synagogue to pray!" They received their reward, the praise of man.

On the other hand in **Matthew 6:6**, Jesus said to go into your closet, shut the door and pray to your Father who sees in secret. Then your Father shall reward you openly. Prayer is rewarding. Even false prayers spoken for man's acclamation are rewarding. But from which source do you want your reward, man or God?

Oftentimes we fall into peculiar prayer habits. If we're impressed by a certain way a person prays, we'll incorporate their mode of behavior or way of thought into our own prayer's. For instance, I may acquire a particular "prayer voice" by expressing my words with a little vibrato and sustain. "Oohh, God." Of

course, I wouldn't dare talk to another person that way because he'd think I was weird. Also, some people do their praying in Old English vocabulary which they think sounds so much more spiritual.

Not me brother, I have trouble talking in cowboy english as it is. God probably hears my prayer start and starts laughing at my accent. So I just say what I need to say and get it done.

In **Matthew 6:8** Jesus said that your Father knows what you need before you even ask Him. So, just ask! God doesn't need to be sold a bill of goods. He's going to answer either yes or no, regardless of how you say it. Jesus said, "Ask [please ask], and you shall receive," in **John 16:24**. By asking, you open the door for God to do what He's wanted to do and to bless you like He's wanted to bless you all along.

As I have already said, Jesus gave us a basic form for prayer. **Matthew 6:9**, This, then, is how you should pray. This prayer form immediately reveals that which is vital for effective prayer, a close personal relationship between the petitioner and God. Your relationship to God is often manifested in how you address Him.

Some people begin their prayers with "Almighty God." If that's your relationship, then that's the way you should talk to Him. If you don't really know Him as your Father, then you should address Him as "Almighty God" or, "Eternal God." But, thank God, through Jesus Christ I can have a beautiful Father-son relationship.

1 John 3:1 says, See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Think of it! We've been called sons of God. I can now come to Him and say, "Father!" But only through Jesus Christ can we be sons. Those outside of Jesus Christ have a distant relationship to the almighty, eternal God. But you, through Jesus Christ, have come into an intimate relationship. You may say, "Our Father, which are in heaven."

John said in **John 1:12**, As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. Romans 8:15-16 says, God has given each of us "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Because I'm His child, I naturally call Him "Father." Relationship is of vital importance in prayer. Jesus continues His model prayer with praise and worship. Worship is an important part of prayer. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise" Psalm 100:4. Too often we just blunder right in and blurt out our requests. To enrich your prayer life, just praise Him for awhile. Then present your petitions.

The first two petitions in Jesus' model prayer are in the form of intercession. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things, that you're so often praying about, shall be added unto you." **Psalms 37:4** says, Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

So many times men seek happiness by direct pursuit. But happiness can never be discovered by direct pursuit. Happiness is the by-product of a personal relationship with God. If you have a right relationship with God, you will be filled with happiness. In prayer, put those at the top of your list, and

you'll find that God will take care of all the other things you've struggled with and have failed to accomplish. You can come to God and make your needs and your requests known to Him. You can open your heart to Him and lay bare the innermost secrets of your soul. You can have such a blessed time by talking with the Father and finding His help, strength, and guidance. What a privilege it is to pray! May God help you to discover the full, beautiful experience of prayer, not a work, not a task, not a duty, not a burden, not an obligation, but the most joyous **privilege** in the world!

We have finally arrived at how to have Effective Prayer.

The Bible teaches that faith produces answered prayer. Jesus said in **Mark 11:24**, Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

The key word here is Faith. So what is faith and how do we enlarge our faith?

The bible describes faith in **Hebrews 11:1**, Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. The dictionary describes it as, a complete trust or confidence in someone or something. So I find it easier to have faith for answered prayers when I realize the magnificent power of the One to whom I'm talking.

In the Book of **Acts 4:24** the disciples prayed, "Sovereign Lord," they said, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. When you pray you're actually talking to the divine Creator of this entire universe. Remember that! Too often we carry our own limitations over to God. Sometimes we know too much about the circumstances of a situation, and we have difficulty praying with faith.

All Christians want, or should want, to increase their faith. But those who have given their lives to Christ have come to realize that success does not come from our own human attempts, we always fail. **1 Corinthians 4:7** reminds us, For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? Without God, we are left to our own resources, which plague us with pride, stubbornness, indifference, insensitivity, and failure. The only one we can count on who absolutely will not fail us is God.

Our journey of faith with God requires that we immerse ourselves in His Word. We must learn about His love, His justice, His mercy, and His plan. We must form a relationship with Him, so that we can know Him personally through His Son, Jesus Christ. We should ask Him to reveal Himself to us and change us. The Bible promises that if we seek God, we will find Him in **Matthew 7:7**. And if we allow Him to, He will transform us into new people who can know His will. We have to be willing to die to our old selves and let go of the pride and selfishness that kept us from Him for so long. As God changes us, we will learn to develop the fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit, who dwells in all Christians. As we walk in the Spirit, allowing Him to control our lives, we will begin to trust in Him. We will be nourished by him, so our faith will grow strong and vigorous in the truth we are taught.

We have to learn to step out in faith, moving out of our comfort zone. As we step out past our comfort zone our faith will grow more and more with each step out we take.

I did a sermon years ago on faith using a rope bridge over a canyon as my example. First I ask who in this room has faith. A lot of hands went up. So I said, okay, we are walking on a trail in the woods and come upon a rope bridge across a washed out spot. Upon farther examination the wash is only about two feet deep, but too rough to walk on so they built a rope bridge over it. I ask how many in here could cross over on the rope bridge? Pretty much the same amount of hands went up as before.

Then I said, okay, let's say the wash is a little deeper. Matter of fact as we walk up on it we see it is around ten feet deep. How many could cross over on the bridge now? Well, I lost a few hands at that depth. I guess their faith is not as strong as they thought.

Then I said, how much faith would it take to cross over on the bridge if we walked upon it and the wash was a canyon around fifty feet deep. How many could cross over now? Wow, I lost over half the hands that were up.

Last one I promise! How many of you would have the faith to cross over on the rope bridge if the canyon was two hundred feet deep? Only a couple of hands remained in the air.

That how faith is from God! As we trust him for the small thing, those small thing start getting larger little at a time. God expects our faith to grow until we are not afraid to raise our hand and say, here I am Lord, use me! Good know me and He knows how much faith he can pour out on me.

So if I want to be an effective prayer warrior, I have to trust God in my faith no matter where He leads me. I have to stand in the promises He has made in His word, knowing He will do great things through me.

So whom are you addressing when you pray? What limit have you place on God's ability? Look around the universe at what God has already done. Then figure out what His limitations might be. He's quite a big God. We sometimes pray as if we were talking to someone extremely limited in his power. "O, Lord! I don't know if You can do this or not. I even hate to ask You. And if You can't, well, that's all right. I understand." Someone just laughed cause they have said that.

Difficulty must always be measured by the capacity of the agent called upon to do the work. Who is the agent you're calling upon? He is God, the Creator of the universe. He is your heavenly Father who loves you and has a deep concern for you. Nothing is too hard for Him.

Jeremiah prayed in **Jeremiah 32:17**, Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

That's a good way to start prayer!

Many times we're too overburdened with the situation when we start to pray. It's been sitting on our shoulders and it feels like a thousand tons. We plead, "O Lord, what can I do? The Doctor said it is not good but I need to do something Lord.

Did you notice, what can I do? We're so taken back with the problem that we've forgotten that we're talking with the One who created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them. It's no more difficult for God to cure a person in the last stages of leukemia than it is for Him to take away a sore throat. It's no more difficult for God to put a new arm on a man than it is to remove his headache.

You may say, "Come on, now. There are limits." What if a starfish lost one of his arms? Would you have a hard time praying, "God, put a new arm on that starfish?" No. We know that nature causes a new arm to grow on a starfish. Cut a little earthworm in half, and nature will make it grow another half. But who is nature? Who created the laws of nature? Could not God, who created us and all the functions

within us, cause a new arm to grow? If He can put within the earthworm the capacity to grow another half, why would it be so difficult for Him to put a new arm or a new leg on a person?

But when we think of such miracles, we're stymied from the human standpoint and carry that limit over to God. We say, "Don't bother about a new arm, God. Just help him adjust to living without it. Sometimes God will perform miracles just to show us that He can do it in spite of our unbelief. Why do we limit God? Because we are limited. We need to realize to whom we're talking when we pray. Get our eyes off our problems. Get our minds on the fact that we're talking to the Creator of all things. God, who is so great, so vast, and so powerful!

As you pray, it is also important to realize the extent of God's wisdom. God knows everything about your life. He knows the troubles you're going through, the situations you're facing, and the problems you have. Even the problems you will have one day in the future.

In fact, thousands of years ago God knew the problems you'd be facing today. He also knew the answer He'd work out for you. God isn't taken by surprise. He isn't at a loss for an answer to your problems. God has your whole situation totally under His control. Satan's actions do not diminish God's control, for Satan can do no more than what God allows him to do. God sets the boundaries for the enemy and says, "You can move in this box but you can't go outside of it." All things are moving within the prescribed limits set by God.

We can look at Job chapter 1 and see where God sets limits on Satan. **Job 1:12** says, The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

Look at Russia, it was one of the most powerful military forces in the world. Look at the armaments and megaton bombs she possessed, her delivery system of ICBM's and their tremendous power. The Russians were threatening not many years ago to bury us. But they can't even lift a bomb off the ground unless God allows them to do it.

All things happen according to God's predetermined counsel. When you pray, remember that nothing is out of God's hand. God has everything under His control, and I might add, His timing is perfect though it is often not in sync with ours. Once everything is in perspective and you realize to whom you're praying, how great God is, how wise He is, and how completely He controls all things, your requests won't seem so impossible.

"O Lord, God, You created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. You've got everything under control. You've written about today's world condition thousands of years ago. It's all happening right on target just as You predicted and according to Your counsel. O Lord, You know my back hurts. Please take the pain away!" If God created the universe, it is certainly not hard for Him to take care of this little annoyance?

The greater our concept of God, the smaller our problem seems. However, most of the time we get right into the problem when we pray. "O, God! This is so big! This is so horrible!" We panic because the mountain seems so high. But God created Mt. Everest, and He could move it to another part of the universe if He so desired! Jesus said in **Matthew 17:20**, Truly I tell you, 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.

How big is that mountain you're facing? "I don't know how I'm going to pay my bills next week! Where will I ever get the money?" Where did all the gold come from anyway? God created it. It's nothing for God to meet your needs. If you can realize His power, His wisdom, His sovereignty, then you can bring your request to God with confidence and ease.

In the Old Testament in **2 Chronicles 14:11** King Asa said, LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. LORD, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you."

In other words, it really makes no difference to God whether you have a big army or a small platoon. Early one morning Jonathan arose and saw Israel's enemies, the Philistines, camped in the distance. Most of Saul's army had deserted and fled across the Jordan river. He looked around and saw that the men in his own army were fast asleep. He nudged his armor bearer and said, "Wake up! Look at all those Philistines over there. I wonder if God wants to deliver the Philistines to Israel today? If He does He doesn't need the whole army. He can deliver the Philistines to the two of us just as easily as to the whole army. Let's venture over to the Philistine camp and see if God wants to work for Israel today."

They came into the camp of the Philistines and began attacking them. These two fellows began the rout of the whole Philistine army! This is from **2 Samuel 14:1-18**.

It makes no difference to God whether you're weak or strong, whether you have a whole army or you're alone. If God is doing the work, that's all that counts. How do we engage in prayers that produce results? How can we pray effectively? Get the right concept of God, and the rest is easy!

Let's exercise and build our Spiritual Strength in Prayer.

What is spiritual strength? Like building physical strength when you work out, building spiritual strength is similar but on the inside. Building your "spiritual strength" activates your spirit and connection to the divine from within, giving you the power you need to live a life of purpose and fulfillment. Even though you already may be living a fulfilling life, your spiritual exercises will make life that much sweeter.

Just like the feeling after a physical workout, spiritual exercise allows your energy to flow more freely, and the feelings of love and positivity will fill your being. Negative thoughts will be forgotten and negative experiences will diminish. When you give and receive positive energy through these exercises, you immediately feel happier and more fulfilled.

I want to explore 7 simple spiritual exercises and see if we can apply them to our prayer life.

Spend more time with loving, encouraging family and friends. Think of your relationships for a moment, does it paint a picture that you'd like to improve? Some of your best moments in life can be with family, but some others may not be so memorable. Don't hold on to the negative memories, they're too much of a burden to bear. Release them and know that they will be taken care of for you.

You are meant to be happy and enjoy life, especially happy times with those who you are close with. When you're focused on being spiritually centered, you are always divinely protected. Some negative thoughts can come up and try to bring you down, but you can be confident in your spiritual strength, letting it speak for you, kind of like a bodyguard!

Give this time with your family or friends the attention and love it deserves. When your heart opens up to your loved ones this way, new patterns and thoughts develop in you. From these new thoughts, you can build the foundation to healthier relationships. Take action to show those important to you how much you appreciate them. It can be as simple as a phone call or email to warm someone's heart. It could even turn their whole life around.

This one may be hard for some to believe but Go outside as much as possible. Getting outside is vital to building your spiritual strength. An increased connection to nature and the Earth places you in alignment with the real living energy. It directly connects you to the divine, allowing positive energy to channel to you and through you. Don't worship nature but worship the create as you look around in awe.

Think about it this way. When it is raining and gloomy, how does it make you feel. Lazy, sad, no energy, etc.. But what about when the sun comes back out, You almost want to throw a party, right. Sun shine is good for our physical and spiritual well being.

Enjoy the sunshine and let it shine on your face. As you spend more time outside, be aware of the sights and sounds of nature. Feel the energy of the wind as it blows past you and be sure to smell your

surroundings. You were meant to be pleased through your senses, and nature can do that in multiple ways.

Reduce distractions such as TV, Radio, Internet, Newspaper. Media can fill your mind with thousands of ads, episodes, and events that are nowhere near vital to living your best life. When you reduce the absorption of participating in these activities, there is far less manufactured stimuli being fed in, and your brain has a chance to be silent. These moments of silence gives you an opportunity to strengthen your spiritual connection to God.

Joshua 1:8 says, Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Also **Psalms 1:2** says, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

It is very difficult to think about the word of God or God and Jesus for that matter if you have these distractions. Somebody just said, You just don't understand. I'm not a pastor, I can't do like you do!

Well maybe not, but have you even tried. I tell people just reduce your intake of these things little by little until there gone.

Step out in faith every now and again. Be confident, stand strong in the face of adversity. Know that Jesus has got your back, and that a bigger breakthrough is in store for you beyond your challenges. You become stronger and wiser when you step out in faith. Before long you will step out and not even think about it, You will just do it.

The strength of a believer always is related to his faith in God. Jesus said in **John 15:5**, Without me you can do nothing. Unfortunately, we don't always believe that. In fact, it seems that we often believe just the opposite. You don't have to help me this time." Then when we totally fail, Jesus reminds us, Without me you can do nothing. We have proven the truth of that statement over and over again in our lives. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. We are really weak and helpless.

On the other hand, I've discovered another beautiful truth from Philippians **4:13**, one that Paul also discovered. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Apart from Him I'm totally helpless and have no strength. Through Christ I have strength to meet any situation and to overcome any difficulty. In myself I am weak, but in Him I am strong.

Some people are strong within themselves. They trust in their own abilities and then gloat in their independence and strength. However, no matter how strong a person thinks he may be, there will come a day when he exhausts his own resources and finally confesses, "I can't do it! I can't go on!" When the man who has learned to trust only in himself comes to that day of reckoning, it is a tragic and disastrous day. But for the man who has learned to trust in the Lord, that day is no different than any other, because he has learned to turn every day over to God. The man who is self-reliant, self-willed, and self-made will ultimately fall. But the man who has learned to trust in the Lord for his strength will never fall. As long as I am looking to myself and my own resources, I will always be restricted by my human limitations. But if I trust in God and in His resources, then I have His infinite capacities available to me.

I can never face a situation which is too big for God and me to handle. There is no obstacle so great that God and I can't overcome. There is no enemy too strong for God and I to defeat. God and I make a

majority in any crowd! Romans 8:31 says, If God is for us, who can be against us? Learn to turn to God for your resources and your strength.

In **2 Corinthians 12:9**, Paul is speaking of his infirmities or weaknesses. He speaks of glorying in his weaknesses that the power of Christ might rest upon him. He said that he actually took pleasure in his weaknesses, for when he was weak then he was strong. My greatest area of strength is where I know that I am weak and cannot make it without the Lord's help. God is our source of strength, but prayer is the channel through which God gives us His strength.

One of the best examples of Prayer In Action is from Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a man of the word and prayer. When Hanani and the other travelers returned from Jerusalem, Nehemiah questioned them about his beloved city. Hanani told him of the bad state of affairs in Jerusalem. "The walls are broken down. The people are demoralized. They're barely existing. They're an easy prey to all of their enemies. They have no defenses. The city is in shambles!"

When Nehemiah heard the condition of Jerusalem, God's holy city, he wept before the Lord. Then Nehemiah fasted, prayed, and confessed to God his sins and the sins of the people. He also acknowledged the righteousness of God's judgment against Jerusalem.

Notice how he used the word in his prayer. **Nehemiah 1:1-11**, He said, "Lord, You said by the mouth of Moses that if we turn from You, You would turn Your back upon us and make us afraid of our enemies, and we would be scattered into the world. But, Lord, You also said that if we would turn back to You and seek Your face and call upon You, You would hear us and restore and rebuild the land".

The burden on Nehemiah's heart was to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The Bible shows us how God opened the doors for Nehemiah's prayer to be answered.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king of Persia in Shushan. This prestigious position brought him into daily contact with the king. **Nehemiah 2:1-4** (paraphrasing), One day as he bore the cup to the king, the king asked, "Nehemiah, why are you looking so sad today? I've never seen you so glum." Nehemiah replied, "I've just received the report concerning Jerusalem. It is devastated and the people are demoralized. How can I be happy when the city I love is so desolate?" The king said, "What would you like me to do?" Nehemiah tells us, "I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king..." When the king said, "What can I do for you?" Nehemiah prayed, "Quick, God, help! What do I say?"

Nehemiah prayed first and then acted. That is the correct order: pray, then act. If we always prayed before we acted, needless to say, we would act differently in many cases. We wouldn't be so apt to act rashly or inappropriately.

The Bible promises of **Proverbs 3:6** is, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Prayer was such an important part of Nehemiah's life that it was simultaneous with his actions.

Nehemiah's response to the king's question was to ask for permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The king granted Nehemiah's request, and sent him to Jerusalem with a company of men. As Nehemiah and his men were rebuilding the wall, their enemies gathered around them and tried to defeat the Israelites by ridiculing them and mocking the construction of the wall.

Many times Satan uses ridicule to discourage you in the work of God. He says, "Who do you think you are? Billy Graham? Are you out to save the world?" Ridicule is one of the main tools the enemy uses to thwart your efforts for God. And it's a powerful tool. None of us like to be ridiculed. Too often that device actually stops a person's ministry for God. But Nehemiah did the right thing. Instead of battling the enemy himself and answering the mockery, he prayed, "Lord, You've heard them. Take care of them. Wipe them out. Lead them into captivity" (**Nehemiah 4:1-5**).

Don't respond to ridicule by striking back. It's much better to commit it to the Lord and let Him be your defense. You'll surely be strong in Him. When the enemy realized that they couldn't discourage the rebuilding of the wall through ridicule, they planned to attack and tear it down at night. Nehemiah heard of the conspiracy and replied, "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night" (**Nehemiah 4:9**).

This brings out an important point. Prayer should never be an excuse for idleness or foolhardy action. God has given you good common sense and He expects you to use it. If you're being threatened by an enemy, pray first, but then take what defensive measures are necessary. Action following prayer is not a lack of faith.

Be practical. If you ask God to heal your poor eyesight, don't throw away your eyeglasses before the optometrist has a chance to retest you and says that you've been healed. Prayer shouldn't lead you into reckless or careless actions. It should actually create a diligence within you. In fact, prayer will lead you into activity more often than it will lead you into inactivity. Pray first, then take steps of action.

Some people are very lazy and think that God is going to do all the work for them. You question them about something and they use the excuse, "I'm just leaving that in the hands of the Lord." No, the Lord expects you to act, too!

For instance, if you need a job, you don't just sit at home and wait for someone to call. You ask God to give you one. Then go out and submit applications every place you can. Then trust that the Lord will open the door to the job He wants you to have. Don't just sit there and say, "Okay, Lord, bring me the job." You don't say that when you have to eat. You don't lie in bed and say, "If you want me to eat today, Lord, just drop the food in my mouth." You're not passive about that, and you shouldn't be passive about the other areas of your life.

"So we prayed unto God," Nehemiah said, "and we set a watch against the enemy." The Israelites built the wall with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. The enemy saw that they were armed and prepared, so he didn't attack; instead, he planned new ways for Jerusalem's destruction. Nehemiah, knowing the enemy was trying to weaken him and the hands of his men, prayed, "God, strengthen my hands" (**Nehemiah 6:9**). Nehemiah, a man of prayer, was a man of action and of strength as a result.

A Man of Prayer prays about everything, little things as well as big things. Oftentimes, we're reluctant to pray about the little things because we're afraid to bother God with trivia. He's so busy running the universe that He doesn't need to help me in the small areas of my life. But Jesus said that our heavenly Father is conscious of the sparrow falling to the ground. How much more is He conscious of our every need, in **Luke 12:6-7**.

The Bible also commands in **Philippians 4:6**, In every thing by prayer and supplication and thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. If you really love someone, it doesn't matter how often he calls or what he calls about, you're just glad to hear from him. God loves you so much, He doesn't care how trivial your need might be. He just loves to hear from you.

Jesus said **Luke 18:1**, Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Why then are so many people losing heart and never praying? I hear people say, "I don't know what I'm going to do! I don't know where to turn." They're fainting. Learn of God's grace through prayer. Learn to turn every situation over to God so your life might be strengthened by His hand upon you.

As a result of Nehemiah's close fellowship with God, the walls of the city were rebuilt in 52 days. Others had tried to rebuild those same walls of Jerusalem for almost a 100 years! Not only that, there was a spiritual revival among the people. While doing the physical work of God, Nehemiah and his men also did a spiritual work. The Israelites became so excited that their walls were rebuilt and they could again dwell securely in Jerusalem that they gathered together to worship the Lord.

In the temple, Ezra the scribe brought out the law of God and read it to the people. It was accompanied by repentance and weeping before God. The hearts of the people were turned back to the Lord.

One man living in prayer and fellowship with God can accomplish incredible results! As I look around today, I see that we're living in a needy world. We need people who live in fellowship with God, who know the strength of God, and who are willing to pray for God's work to be done. Why not be that man of prayer for the sake of this poor, lost world, nation, city, schools, or perhaps even your own family.

If we Pray, He Will Answer. I am always interested in the prayers we find in the Bible. And I'm especially interested in those prayers that produced results. The prayer of Jabez in the Old Testament is one such example. In studying his words, we can learn some valuable insights into prayer.

First of all, the Bible declares in **1 Chronicles 4:10** that when Jabez prayed, he "called on the God of Israel."

What God do you call upon when you pray? I've met people who live very carelessly and recklessly. From outward observances they lead very sinful lives. When we start talking and they realize that I'm a pastor, they usually interject, I know that I'm not living like I should, but I pray every night. I never go to sleep without saying my prayers.

When these people pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee Lord..." - whom are they addressing? Who is the true "Lord" of their lives?

When we teach our children this little prayer, we are just teaching them that prayer is needed. But many of these children never learn any different. They grow into adults and still say that same prayer when troubled.

"Lord" is not so much a name as it is a title. People serve many different gods, many different lords. Who is the lord of your life? It's important to know the one you're addressing in your prayers. Jesus said that not all who say, "Lord, Lord" are going to enter the kingdom of heaven.

God told Jeremiah in Jeremiah 11:12, that when the people of Israel call to Him, He would no longer hear them. The next time they're in trouble, they were not to ask God for help. Let them call on the gods that they've been serving." Thus when Israel cried, "O god, help us." They might be calling Baal, or Molech, or Ashtoreth.

It's a tragic day when God finally says to a man, "I've had it! You've lived a careless life and you've worshiped and served everything but Me, but when you're in trouble you call on Me. Next time you're in trouble, just call on the gods you've been serving." Your god is really the supreme passion of your life.

For instance, many people today worship and serve their intellects. "To know and to understand," they say, "is the greatest good. I cannot accept the idea of a supreme being because I do not believe in anything I cannot bring into the confines of my mind." Therefore, when they pray, "O god," they're actually praying to their own intellects.

In ancient times people named and worshiped a multitude of gods. But we're too sophisticated today to give ancient names to our gods. A person today might serve his passions but, if asked who his god is, he wouldn't say, "Venus, the goddess of love." He'd just say, "I'm a lover. I believe a person should seek the best things of life. Love is the ultimate. Therefore, to make love is the chief goal of man." When he cries, "O god," he might as well be crying "O Venus!"

There are others who deify the pleasure principle. They live and work the entire week with one thing on their mind, the **weekend**. "Friday night we'll get in the camper, with the three wheeler on the back, the boat on top, and the dune buggy behind, and we'll head out for the river! Wow, what a weekend we'll have!" All week long they're thinking of the thrills, excitement, and pleasures they'll have on the weekend.

Every night they tinker around at home in preparation to go Friday night. There was an ancient faith whose believers also worshiped pleasure. They called their god Molech. Many people today, when they cry "O God," are actually crying to Molech because, in reality, he is their god.

There are others who deify the power principle. "Might is right." They seek to possess and to have. They're constantly scheming to get more money in order to get more possessions. Their minds are always analyzing how to cut this, increase that, invest here or there. They take second jobs. Their interests are centered around money, money, and more money. This is the worship of the old god Mammon. When these people are in trouble, they cry, "O god!" But their god Mammon can't hear.

It's important to realize that the prospect of your prayers being answered is totally dependent upon the one whom you petition. You might tell me, "JD, I need one hundred thousand dollars. You don't know how desperately I need it. If I don't get it, I don't know what I'm going to do!" You could plead with me for a whole week, two weeks, or two years, but you don't have a chance of getting that amount from me. I just don't have it. You're petitioning someone who has no power or capacity to answer.

When the prophets of Baal were beseeching their god to send fire to their altar, they cried all morning. "O Baal, send fire!" But there was no fire. About noon Elijah said, "Fellows, I bet the problem is that your god has gone someplace. Or else he's sleeping. Why don't you cry a little louder? Maybe then he'll hear you." They started crying louder, and soon they were cutting themselves and leaping on their altar to get Baal's attention! **1 Kings 18:26-29**. They could have gone on forever, and still no fire would have come down to consume their sacrifice. Why? Because their god had no capacity to answer.

They make God's of love, money, pleasure, or intellect is to deify impersonal, impotent forces. In the hour of real need these gods can produce nothing. But when I cry to Jehovah, the God of Israel, I know that he is able to do far more abundantly than all that I ask or think as it says in Ephesians 3:20. There's no end to God's power. When I cry to Him, He is able to meet my needs. "One hundred thousand dollars?" He asks. "Is that all?" It's nothing for God to meet my need, no matter what it might be.

When Jehovah God is the agent I call upon, nothing is too difficult for Him. But if Venus, Molech, Mammon, or Baal are the agents I call upon to do a work, then I'm really in a bind. In the hour of real need, when I cry in desperation, they just aren't there to help. Life is so empty for the people who live for pleasure. I've stood beside many people in their time of need. When their love one is lying on a hospital bed and the doctor walks out of the operating room shaking his head, they look at me as if to say, "Do something, preacher!" Their god of pleasure is so empty at that time. He has so little comfort, help, or hope to offer.

But when you worship God and call upon Him as your Lord, it's glorious to know that He is able to help. And not only able to help, but willing and wanting to help. Paul said to the Athenians on Mars Hill, that the God he wanted to talk to them about, the One they called the unknown God, is the One who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. **Acts 17:22-28** says in a nutshell, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." That's the One I cry to when I call upon God, the One who rules me and is Lord of my life.

I thought this would be a good place to look at the Petitions of Jabez. Does anyone remember the little book that came out back about the 2000's. Everyone had one but noone knew what it really was about. It was the Prayer of Jabez. I want us to look at Jabez's petitions.

First of all, Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, Oh, that you would bless me, in **1 Chronicles 4:10**. Jabez wasn't ashamed to say, "Bless me." And I'm not ashamed to ask God to bless me. I want God to bless me. I want every blessing that God has for me. If I'm to be a blessing to others I must first receive the blessings of God.

The full verse in **1 Chronicles 4:10** says, Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.

Now notice the blessings that Jabez requested. First of all he said, "Enlarge my territory, some versions say coast". The Jews had come into the Promised Land, but much of the land was in the hands of the enemy. God had promised them the entire land, but they had not yet obtained the full promise of God. Thus Jabez prayed, "Lord, enlarge my coast," or actually, "Help me to possess all that You've given me."

I pray this in my own life. "Lord, help me to possess all that You have given and promised to me." God has given to us rich and precious promises. We can be living in a glorious spiritual atmosphere, as we live in the heavens in Christ Jesus. But instead we choose to drag along on the bottom of the pile, groveling in the dirt. You may enjoy it down here, but I enjoy it up there. Thus I pray, "Lord, bless me and help me to possess all that You have given to me. I thank You for what You've already done for me, Lord, but You've promised so much more..."

After all, why should you close the door on what God wants to do for you? Some people say, "I really don't feel I need the gifts of the Spirit." Personally, I need everything that God has to give me. Not only do I need everything that God has offered to give me, I desire everything that He has to give. When I come to God, I don't close any doors. I say, "Okay, Lord, here I am. Do things Your way. Don't let me put any restrictions in Your path. Enlarge my coast, and allow me to possess all that You have promised."

Whenever I try to dictate to God what blessings I will accept, and which I reject, I'm actually exalting my own wisdom above His. I'm saying that I know my needs better than He knows. "You can do this and this for me, God, but I don't want You to do that." Not me! I pray, "Enlarge my coast, Lord. Bless me. Do all that You want to do in my life."

Then Jabez prayed, "Let your hand be with me." It is so important that I have the hand of God upon my life in all the things I do. It's dangerous to undertake any project without God's hand upon me.

Moses said to the Lord in **Exodus 33:15**, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Lord, don't lead me anywhere You're not going to be with me. I can go forth with assurance, comfort, and power when I know that God's hand is upon my life. I need no longer tremble.

Jabez's next petition was, keep me from harm. This is such an important prayer that Jesus included it as the last petition in the Lord's Prayer. "Deliver us from evil" (**Matthew 6:13**). The evil one is always

trying to draw us into his snare. I so easily fall into the snare of the enemy and allow hatred to begin to master my life, bitterness to control me, or some evil way to get its grip upon me. It's difficult to live a righteous life. In fact, it's not possible by our own human energy. It takes the power of the Spirit of God in me to live righteously.

Then Jabez continued, keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain. The primary result of evil is very rarely grief. The primary result of evil is quite often thrills and excitement. Evil often has the appearance of being very prosperous. "It looks like such an easy way to make a quick buck. Of course, it isn't quite honest. But look at the profits you can make. And look at what you can do with the money that you get from the profits!"

The primary result of evil may be joy, excitement, pleasure, or possessions, but the end result of evil is always grief. You may not think so right now. Sin may seem very exciting to you today. But a wise man will always consider the final destination of the path he is taking. Where is your path leading you? If it is a path of evil, my friend, it is leading you to grief.

In **Psalm 73** Asaph said that he was envious of the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. This almost stumbled him in his walk and commitment to the Lord until he considered the end results of their wickedness.

In the **Proverbs 5:3-5**, Solomon warned his son about the prostitute. "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell".

At first glance sin may look exciting, but the end result is death and hell. Solomon declared in **Proverbs 14:12**, "There is a way which seem right unto a man, but the end there of are the ways of death."

So what was the result of Jabez's prayer? The Bible said, "God granted him that which he requested." Praise the Lord! Jabez asked God to bless him and God did bless him. He asked the Lord to enlarge his coast and the Lord enlarged his coast. Jabez said, "Lord, keep your hand upon me," and God kept His hand on him. He said, "Lord keep me from evil," and the Lord kept him from evil.

It's glorious to know that I can pray and if I pray according to the will of God, the Bible promises in **1 John 5:14-15**, 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.

I can pray with confidence for God to bless me, enlarge my territory or coast, keep His hand upon me, and keep me from evil, for this is the will of God for my life. John 16:24 says, Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask (please ask) and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

The Sin of Prayerlessness.

1 Samuel 12:23 As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you.

In your walk with the Lord, God will lift you up to the highest level you allow Him, and He'll do His best for you on that level. But, unfortunately, so many times we limit what God wants to do in our lives by insisting on our own way instead of yielding to His way. God would do so much more for us, but so many times we're too busy insisting, "This is the way I want it, God!" In demanding my own way, I go from God's best to second or third best. His work in my life is often limited because I reject His divine way.

Such was the case with Israel. Israel was once a theocracy, a nation governed by God. But the time came in Israel's history when the people no longer wanted God to rule over them. They demanded a king like all the other nations. This was a time of national disaster as Israel deteriorated from a theocracy to a monarchy.

God accommodated the demands of the people and commanded Samuel to anoint Saul as king. God did not wipe out the Israelites and say, "I'm through with you!" They were still God's people. He did the best He could under their imposed conditions... and He appointed a king for Israel.

However, God wanted them to know that He was displeased with their decision. Through Samuel He told them that He was going to send rain on their wheat fields. The rain came and the people grew very fearful. They cried to Samuel, their prophet, "We've sinned! Pray to God for us that we will not die, for we have added to all of our other sins by asking for a king."

Samuel answered, "Don't be afraid. Even though you have sinned, you're still God's people. He has chosen you for His name's sake." Then he said these amazing words 1 Samuel 12:16-23: verse 23, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you.

According to this passage, it is actually a sin not to pray. How many times are we guilty of the sin of prayerlessness! Think of what a reproach it is to God when you do not pray. God is the Creator of the universe. **John 1:3**, All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. The One who has created this vast universe has given you an invitation to come, talk, and fellowship with Him. He has invited you to enter into His presence to share any problems or needs you might have. Yet, so many times we ignore this invitation.

Imagine that in your mail was a letter which had a engraved, full-color, embossed seal on the back. You tear open the letter and find a formal invitation to very important event with all expenses paid. What would you do? Toss it away? No. Would you fail to respond? Of course not.

If you respond to a human being's invitation with graciousness, think of the reproach when God, who has invited you to come and have fellowship with Him, is refused. You may say, "I just don't have time to pray." Do you have time to watch television? We have time to do the things we really want to do.

Therefore, God must assume that we really don't want to fellowship with Him. And that's a correct assumption. Our flesh rebels against prayer because it's an exercise of the spirit. That is why I get so tired as soon as I start to pray. I say, "I'm too sleepy, Lord." My flesh is rebelling against the spiritual exercise of prayer.

The spirit and flesh are always warring against each other. Whenever we enter into spiritual exercise, our flesh rebels against it. We find any excuse possible. "I'm too upset to pray" or "I'm too weak to pray."

Prayerlessness actually hinders the work of God. You may ask, "Isn't God sovereign? Can't He do whatever He wants to do? Doesn't He rule over the entire universe? Aren't His purposes going to be accomplished no matter what? Then how can prayerlessness hinder the work of God?"

It is true that God is sovereign. But it's also true that God has created us as free moral agents. We have the capacity to choose and act freely, and God respects your free moral agency. He will not force His will nor His desires upon your life. He has given you the ability to choose, and He honors your choice. God has ordained that His work on earth be wrought through prayer and by our agreeing together in prayer.

In **Psalm 78:41**, it declares that the Hebrew nation "limited the Holy One of Israel." An unlimited God was limited by man's unbelief. What is it that keeps you from prayer? Unbelief. You can actually limit the work God wants to do by your unbelief.

Jesus said in **John 15:16**, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

God wants to give you many things, but He will not give them until you pray. By prayer you're actually opening the door to let God do the things He wants to do. I believe we have seen only a small fraction of what God has wanted to do, because of our lack of prayer.

God commands us to pray. Therefore, not to pray is an act of disobedience against God. The Bible says in **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, "Pray without ceasing", and "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" in **Luke 18:1**.

Failure to pray is a sin because I am disobeying the actual command of God. We need to pray for one another. It is a sin if I, as a pastor, fail to pray for my flock. The Scripture says, "Pray one for another" in **James 5:16**. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" in **Galatians 6:2**.

Sometimes, we may pray about a certain problem in another person's life. When the problem doesn't immediately go away, we become so discouraged that we decide to quit praying for him altogether. We become so upset with other people's failures, even though we may have the same faults in our lives. Our sins always look horrible when someone else is committing them!

Samuel had prayed that God would change the people's minds so they would no longer insist on a

king. Samuel wanted God to rule and reign over the nation. But after all his prayers the children of Israel still insisted on a king. Samuel easily could have become disgusted and said, "I'm not going to pray for those stubborn, stiff-necked people anymore! They have what they asked for. Let them reap the consequences." But he didn't. He said to them, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.."

If you examine yourself, you'll find a variety of reasons for the lack of prayer in your life. The first cause is the lack of time. In this society we've allowed ourselves to become busier than God originally intended. When the Lord first created our bodies He intended for man to live at a much easier, more relaxed pace than we live today.

Today, our lifestyle and our society make it difficult to find time to be alone with the Lord. Also, it is extremely difficult to find an undisturbed place to pray. It's getting harder and harder to find a quiet place to be alone with the Lord. This world is becoming more congested and overcrowded, and Satan does everything he can to interrupt any quiet times you may have with the Lord.

For instance, you may go for a week without one telephone call. But, if you get lonesome and want the telephone to ring, just kneel down and pray. It may be a wrong number, but you can be sure the telephone is going to ring, or someone will be at the front door, or one of the children will come in crying. So many disturbances make it difficult to pray.

Another hindrance to prayer is the tendency to let your mind wander. You begin to pray about certain things. Quite soon your mind has taken you fishing, the fish are biting, looking for the big one, oops, "Sorry, Lord!" Your mind has taken a little side journey. Another problem which causes a lack of prayer is drowsiness. We live under such pressure most of the time that any free moment is a moment to rest.

For instance, if you kneel down beside your bed and put your head in your arms and start to pray, that's a real good position to sleep! You soon doze off in the middle of a prayer. After a while your legs and knees begin to ache. It wakes you up. You suddenly realize, "I've been sleeping on the job!" It's even worse if you decide to lie in bed and pray with your head on the pillow.

Now, I don't discourage that completely. I go to sleep every night talking to the Lord. I enjoy communing with the Lord till I'm asleep. But it is necessary to have a prayer time that's much more active and alert.

What can we do to overcome our problem of prayerlessness? I have a few practical suggestions. As far as time is concerned, we must discipline ourselves and take time for prayer. You'll never find time to pray. You must make time. Life is made up of priorities. Since you can never do all that you want to do, you must always sacrifice the less important things for the more important ones. A wise man makes good use of his time and keeps his priorities in proper perspective.

Prayer is the most important activity you could ever engage in. It should be at the top of your priority list of things to do. You need to take the time for prayer even if you have to skip your time to eat or read a book in the evening! Secondly, find a place that is undisturbed. It may take some doing, but make the effort. Many times I go outside for walk to get alone with the Lord. I also wake up much earlier than my wife. Prayer is more important to me than my sleep, and the phone rings very seldom in the early morning.

To keep my mind from wandering, I usually vocalize my prayers. It's true that God knows what's in my heart, but when I try to pray out of my heart my mind often wanders. For a moment I'm thinking, "Lord, take care of this and that. Thank you for this" and pretty soon I'm fishing again! But when I vocalize my prayer, I have to think about what I'm saying. That causes me to concentrate on my conversation with the Lord. I've found that it's best for me to pray while sitting in a chair. I don't even close my eyes because that can get dangerous for me! I'm one of them people who fall asleep easy.

However, in the Scriptures we are told to pray without ceasing in **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, which certainly indicates that prayer is not a position of the body. If I have to kneel down to pray, prayer without ceasing would mean that I would never get off my knees. Likewise, God does not expect us always to pray with our eyes closed, because prayer without ceasing would mean that I would never again open my eyes! Whether my eyes are open or closed, God hears all my prayers just the same.

I have found a good solution to drowsiness or sleepiness while praying is walking. As I'm walking I can't fall asleep. Sometimes I even walk back and forth in a room. Other times I go for a walk in the yard and talk to God. Some of my most fruitful and blessed prayer times have been during walks.

When I pray I talk to God just like I talk to my closest friend. I don't use any fancy tones or get wild and yell. God knows the real me. I don't need a "prayer tone." I talk to Him in a very matter-of-fact way. I tell Him all my problems, doubts, and questions. I try to be as honest with Him as I can. I might as well because He knows if I'm not! If I try to gloss over something, the only one who's getting fooled is me. God isn't fooled.

I may say, "Lord, you know I don't really have the depth of love for this fellow that I should have." This is an attempt to hide the truth and make me look not as bad as I am. I might as well tell Him the truth. "God, I hate him. I can't stand him. I'd like to punch him in the nose every time I see him!" Be honest, and then repent!

Also, I talk to God in a conversational way. This means that I must listen, too. After all, God wants to talk back to me. I find such joy and blessings as I come into this communion and fellowship with the One who created me.

May God forgive us our sin of prayerlessness. May God help us to pray fervently. And may we see the mighty work of God accomplished in this desperate world through our prayerfulness.

Father in Heaven, Create of all things. Lord, my friend, _____, is bound by the power of Satan. I come to you in the Name of your son Jesus. Lord, His life is being ruined and twisted. I come against that work of Satan in the name of Jesus Christ and in the victory of the cross of Jesus Christ. I ask you, Father, to free him from this power of Satan that's holding him today. Loose him now, that he may know the love of Jesus Christ. Lord, let your Spirit speak to his heart and bring an end to the work of Satan that's binding him, and blinding him. In the Name of Jesus I ask this, Amen

Heavenly Father, giver of life and health: Comfort and relieve your sick servant, and give your power of healing to those who minister to his/her needs, that they may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in your loving care; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Heavenly Father, I come to you in prayer, knowing that you are the LORD who heals. Coming in the name of Jesus, I ask that you take away sickness, infirmity and pain from _____ and restore _____ to health. I thank you for sending your Son into the world, who drove out evil spirits with a command and cured all who were sick. Your love and compassion have not changed. You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. So I ask for your Holy Spirit to flow through me and for the destruction of Satan's work in _____ life. I bless you, Father, and forget none of your benefits. I trust in your promise to forgive all our sins and heal all our diseases. I believe that by Jesus' wounds, I have been healed. I give you all the glory and praise. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Heavenly Father, I come before You, recognizing Your infinite love and grace. You are the source of all goodness and the giver of every perfect gift. I beseech You today to activate within me the gifts of the Holy Spirit that I may bear witness to Your love and bring glory to Your name. Use me as a vessel of Your grace to bring light to the darkness and proclaim Your Gospel to the nations.

I ask for the gift of wisdom, that I may discern Your will in all circumstances. Enable me to grasp the mysteries of faith and share them with others, that they too may come to know You.

I ask for the gift of faith so that I may believe in the impossible and witness Your miraculous power at work.. Help me to fully trust in Your promises, even when I face trials and difficulties.

I ask for the gift of healing, that through me, You may bring comfort and complete restoration to those who are suffering. Use me as an instrument of Your compassion and mercy, that others may experience Your love and power in their afflictions.

I ask for the gift of prophecy, that I may discern Your voice and share Your messages with courage and humility. May your words bring encouragement, conviction, and transformation to those who hear them.

I ask for the gift of tongues, that I may pray and worship You in the spirit. Help me to yield myself to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and pray according to Your perfect will.

Lastly, I ask for the gift of discernment, that I may recognize the movement of Your Spirit in my life and distinguish between truth and deception. Grant me the ability to make wise choices guided by Your truth.

I pray all this in the mighty and precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, In the Name of Jesus, I come before you seeking your divine intervention and healing. Just as the nobleman in the Scriptures believed in you and his son was cured, I place my trust in you and ask for healing. Lord Jesus, you delivered Peter's mother-in-law from her fever with a simple touch. I ask that you lay your hands upon me and remove all sickness and infirmity from my body. I believe in your authority over all illnesses. Just as the centurion had faith that you could heal his servant with just a word, I too believe that your Word is enough. Speak over my life, Lord, and let your power flow through me. In the same way that the woman with the issue of blood reached out in faith and touched the hem of your garment, receiving her healing, I reach out to you now, believing that you can make me whole. Lord, I also remember how you raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, showing that nothing is impossible for you. Please give me new life and vitality through your resurrection power. Thank you Jesus for your love and mercy. I trust in your perfect will and timing. May your name be glorified through my healing. Amen.

Heavenly Father, I come before you in the name of Jesus with an open heart and a heartfelt desire to be baptized in your Holy Spirit. I acknowledge that I am a sinner in need of Your grace and mercy, and I ask for Your forgiveness for all my transgressions. I believe that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross has redeemed me from my sins. Cover me with His blood and hide me in His Sacred Heart. I ask you to immerse me in your Spirit, filling me to overflowing. Infuse my life with your love and power, equipping me to bless others, be of service to them and glorify you. Where gifts are needed to advance your Kingdom – gifts of healing, prophecy, discernment or any others – I ask you to provide them freely. May your fruits of joy and peace also grow in my life. My God, all that I am, I surrender to you without reservation, for this life and eternity. I yield myself fully to your purpose. Thank you for your Word which promises that if I ask, I will receive. So I come with confidence, asking, seeking and knocking. I believe in you, I have faith in You. In Jesus Name, Amen.