

Refine Women's Ministry  
Seasons of Prayer  
In Every Season  
September 11, 2019 by Ann Malm

"...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication..." Eph 6:18a

**Prayer is Always in Season:**

Luke 18:1 "And he told them a parable to the effect *that they ought always to pray* and not lose heart."

Rom 12:12 "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, *be constant in prayer.*"

Col 4:2 "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."

1 Thess 5:17 "Pray without ceasing."

**Examples of Devoted Prayer:**

Acts 1:14 "All these with one accord were *devoting themselves to prayer*, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."

Acts 6:4 "But we will *devote ourselves to prayer* and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 10:2 "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and *prayed continually to God.*"

Col 4:12 "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, *always struggling on your behalf in his prayers*, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God."

"Prayer is irksome. We are reluctant to start and delighted to end." Elisabeth Elliot

**Obstacles to Prayer:**

Worldliness: James describes the world this way; "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". The world is full of earthly pursuits, the here and now. Prayer is a spiritual exercise and there is nothing in the world that encourages us to pray. Jesus commanded His disciples to watch and pray because we are susceptible to physical weakness and spiritual temptation. (Matt. 26:41)

Sin: Just as Adam and Eve hid from God in the garden after they had disobeyed Him, we do the same, just like guilty little child hiding from a parent. Sin breaks fellowship with God. The solution is simple, confession. (Ps 32:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; Matt 6:12) Communion with God is restored through a heart of repentance. (Ps 51:17) Keep short accounts with God; deal with sin right away.

Pride: Prayer is a reflection of our dependence on God. "Our prayerlessness defiantly declares, 'I'll take care of it myself, thank you!'" E. George "The self-sufficient do not pray, the self-satisfied will not pray, the self-righteous cannot pray."<sup>1</sup> We are vulnerable to this obstacle

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<sup>1</sup> The Heart of a Woman Who Prays - Elizabeth George; Source Unknown

every day. It is easy to think we can just get on with our day, that we've got it handled. Pride denies us the comfort, pleasure and wisdom that comes when we rely on God's goodness and strength in prayer.

**Laziness:** Prayer takes effort and discipline; it is work. We are naturally prone to take the easy road physically and spiritually. E. George mentions two things she did to conquer laziness in her life: First, she practiced a night time routine that set her up for success. She calls it her "head for bed" principle. She began to set in motion the bedtime routine as soon as the dinner duties were complete, getting small children ready for bed, shutting down the house, washing face, brushing teeth, checking the schedule for the next day, writing a to do list. She then set out her prayer notebook and Bible in the place where she would intend to have her devotions in the morning. Her intention every night, to this day, is to get to bed as early as possible. Second, she put into practice something she calls her prayer principle: "something is better than nothing." She didn't let the fact that if she didn't have an hour, or even the time she wanted, as an excuse to not pray. She made sure she prayed, even if it wasn't what she had hoped for. She describes the results, "Then, in time, as I began to taste the sweet fruits of time spent in prayer with my heavenly Father, I graduated little by little to greater lengths of time spent on bended knee." E. George

**Busyness:** We simply don't make time for prayer. So how do we deal with the reality of all that we have to do as wives and mothers, sisters, aunts, daughters with the desire to be women who pray?

Martha was so busy with all of the details of the daily that she lost focus on the spiritual. It wasn't the duties that were wrong, it was Martha's perspective in the moment. This shifted focus caused Martha to exchange peace for perplexity, this led to going so far as to cause her to doubt the goodness of the Lord, accusing Him, "Lord, do you not care?" In spite of this, Jesus responds with compassion and lovingly points out Martha's condition, "You are anxious and troubled about many things." He then makes a stunning claim, "but only one thing is necessary." We are to put our relationship with Christ above all things... we must never be too busy to pray. It is of utmost priority that we welcome Christ not only into our home, but into true Lordship over all the things that occupy our time; all our activities and duties. "How many 'welcome' Him by having Bibles on shelves, pictures of Him on the wall, Christian books in neat order, and a general atmosphere of serving Him. But He is given little place when it comes right down to the matter of meditation on His Word and time with Him in prayer."<sup>2</sup> In fact, prayer is essential to our ministry; women hold tremendous power and influence. "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." (Pr.14:1) Neglecting time with God in His word and prayer is simply counterproductive.

**Lacking faith:** We do not believe in the power of prayer, or that prayer really makes a difference...so, we don't pray. Belief/faith is essential to prayer. It is at the very heart of prayer. Do you believe God? Matthew 21:22 "Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." We are apt to forget God's goodness and disbelieve His promises. (Eph 3:20; Phil 4:19)

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<sup>2</sup> An Exposition on Prayer - Dr. Jim Rosscup

“[Prayer is] the way and means of exercising [ ] faith...; *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Faith is the soul, prayer is the body; both together make a complete man for any service. Faith, if it be right, will excite prayer; and prayer is not right, if it does not spring from faith.”<sup>3</sup>

“Cultivate the childlike faith of the little boy who, ready for bed, came in to announce to his family in the living room, ‘I’m going to say my prayers now. Anybody want anything?’”<sup>4</sup>

If we find ourselves skipping prayer, perhaps it is due to a lack of desire to pray. We can know we need to pray, and even learn the skills of praying, but if we never desire to pray it will come to nothing. As we examine the reasons we don’t pray, we should go before God and ask Him to reveal to us the reason for it. Do we lack desire because we are filled with the world? Do we lack the discipline to put our spiritual duties ahead of our physical ones? Are we harboring unconfessed sin? Do we lack faith that God hears prayer?

Prayer is simply talking to God. It is an expression of our dependence on Him and it is how we engage in relationship with Him. God wants His children to come to Him and express their praise, thanksgiving, requests and concerns. ...and He promises help.

#### **His Provision:**

The Holy Spirit: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” Rom 8:26,27

Jesus taught his disciples to pray! Matthew 6, Luke 11

(When we find ourselves lacking confidence in prayer, that is a sign to stop and reflect on the incredible goodness and mercy of God, our standing in Christ, and the great privilege that is ours.)

#### **Our Privilege and His Promise:**

(Remember that prayer is God’s idea, it is an invitation as well as a command. Those who live by faith in Jesus Christ have a very special relationship with God, they are His children and He is their Father.)

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,” John 1:12

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...” Romans 8:15-17a

God desires to communicate with His children the same way you desire your children to come to you to express themselves. God reassures us again and again that He is a good Father, the

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry

<sup>4</sup> The Heart of a Woman Who Prays- Elizabeth George

very Best Father of all. “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” Mt 7:11 He has backed up His claim, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” Romans 8:31-34 How special a relationship we have with the Creator of the universe!

### **His Purpose:**

Prayer is the means in which God delivers His grace and mercy. (Prayer is a mystery.) God could do everything without us, but He has chosen to do it through us. God uses the prayers of His people to advance His kingdom (Matthew 9:38, Matthew 6:10, Ephesians 6:18-20), protect His people (Luke 22:40), and provide for their needs (Matthew 6:6-13, Philippians 4:6). Prayer changes the heart of the prayer and prayer changes the world.

(Beginning next we will be looking at the occasions on which people in the Bible prayed. Today we are going to look at Christ’s instruction to His disciples on prayer.)

## **Discussion**

Read Luke 11:1-13

1. His Provision in Prayer: v.1 - 2a What does it tell you about prayer that Jesus so readily answers His disciples request to teach them? Have you ever asked God to teach you to pray? What were the results?
2. v.2b What title does Jesus instruct His disciples to use when addressing God in prayer? What characteristic of a father does He emphasize in verses 11-13? How does this encourage you in prayer?
3. v.3-4 What are the requests in the Lord’s prayer? How does this help direct you in what to pray for?



And heavier came each task;  
“Why doesn’t God help me?” I wondered  
He answered: “You didn’t ask.”

I wanted to see joy and beauty  
But the day toiled on, gray and bleak;  
I wondered why God didn’t show me,  
He said, “You didn’t seek.”

I tried to come into God’s presence,  
I used all me keys at the lock;  
God gently and lovingly chided;  
“My, child, you didn’t knock.”

I woke up early this morning  
And paused before entering the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
That I had to take time to pray.

### **Homework**

If you struggle with regularly practicing a daily time of prayer, take some time to think about what hinders you. Confess your lack of faithfulness in this area. Ask God to teach you as you seek to obey His command to pray, and to give you a new desire to commune with Him.

Using the following passages (and any other cross references that you may find), reflect on your position in Christ and what impact this has on your relationship with God. Romans 8:31-34; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:13-22; Ephesians 3:12

Jesus Himself practiced a regular habit of prayer, make some observations after meditating on Luke 5:16, Matthew 14:23 and Mark 1:35.

As you think about your season of life with all of its schedules and demands, what time is best for you to be consistent in setting aside time to pray?

If you are an experienced and faithful prayer warrior, thank God for His grace in this area and keep it up! Make note of the things that have been helpful to you in developing a regular habit of prayer and consider encouraging your table next week!

**BONUS:** Read the handout “The Necessity of Prayer and a Regular Prayer Life” and reflect on your “quiet times” with God. Does your time with God reflect a proper balance of prayer AND the Word?

## **Prayer Practice**

1. Sit down with your calendar and look over your commitments. Pay attention to the pattern of your life, your daily routine and the needs of your family. For the next week mark the exact time you will designate as your prayer time (It can be the same time every day or adjusted to fit the demands of the day.) and keep this appointment with God.
2. If you are struggling with having regular, daily time with God, start small (or begin again) with help from the "Quiet Time Practice" handout. Especially consider putting into practice the habit of writing your prayers down and recording the things you learn from Scripture. (If you do not have a quiet time journal, consider getting one. Recording the things God is teaching you is encouraging and results in thanksgiving and praise!)

## Quiet Time Practice

**Pray** “Dear Father, speak to me through Your word, in Jesus name I pray.”

**Read** Mark 10:17-22

**Write** down what this passage teaches you about: (You may not have something to write under each heading, just use what is helpful to you.)

God

Jesus Christ

The Holy Spirit

Yourself

Sins to be confessed or avoided

Commands to obey

How does this apply to your life?

Write out a short prayer about the things you learned about and add something that is on your heart today.