

Refine Women's Ministry

Seasons of Prayer

Praying at all Times

November 20, 2019 by Ann Malm

"...pray without ceasing," 1Thessalonians 5:17

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

"And when you pray..." Matthew 6:6a

"And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Luke 11:9

Prayer is the Christian's Program: Being Fully Persuaded

"As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray." Martin Luther

We are well familiar with these passages. We are expected to pray, we need to pray, we are commanded to pray. So why do we find it difficult to pray?

Our enemy: "Satan is sure to hinder Christians when they are earnest in prayer."¹

"The devil smiles when we make plans. He laughs when we get too busy. But he trembles when we pray, especially when we pray together."² Do not underestimate him; he seeks to accuse, to hinder, he is in a rage and he knows his time is limited.

Our flesh: "In a life lived according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit, we find the origin of prayerlessness of which we complain."³ The fruit of our flesh - unbelief.

We don't believe that time is well spent in prayer.

We don't believe prayer makes a difference.

We don't believe God cares.

We don't believe in the reality of spiritual warfare or that prayer is a powerful weapon.

Or misplaced belief:

We believe we don't have time for prayer.

We believe in our own ability to manage our lives.

We believe other things will satisfy.

We believe God's grace has its limits.

¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on Prayer and Spiritual Warfare* (Whitaker House, 1998).

² Corrie ten Boom

³ Andrew Murray *Living a Prayerful Life* (Bethany House, 2002)

Does this discourage you? Do you feel burdened by your unbelief? Let that feeling move you to seek deliverance and help from the Lord. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus..."

"Many a person has turned to his place of prayer under bitter self accusation that he has prayed so little, and he has resolved for the future to live in a different manner. Yet no blessing has come - there has not been the strength to continue faithful...because his eyes were not fixed on the Lord Jesus. If he had only understood he would have said, 'Lord, you see how cold and dark my heart is. I know that I must pray, but I feel I cannot do so. I lack the urgency and desire to pray.'

He did not know that at that same moment the Lord Jesus in His tender love was looking down upon him saying, 'You cannot pray...Why not give yourself over into my hands? Only believe that I am ready to help you in prayer. I long to pour my love into your heart so that you, in the consciousness of weakness may confidently rely on me to bestow the grace of prayer. Bow before me as one who expects everything from his Savior. Let your soul keep silence before me, however lame you feel your state is. Be assured of this: I will teach you how to pray.'

Andrew Murray

Psalms 40:17 "As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. *You are my help and my deliverer*, do not delay, O my God!

Psalms 50:15 "...and call upon me in the day of trouble;*I will deliver you* and you shall glorify me."

Prayer is the cure for prayerlessness. "Prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Ghost can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer - pray till you can pray." Charles Spurgeon

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 "To this end we always pray for you, that *our God may make you worthy* of his calling and may *fulfill every resolve for good* and every work of faith *by his power*, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

"It is our wisdom, as well as our necessity, to beseech God continually to strengthen that which He has wrought in us. It is because of their neglect in this, that many Christians may blame themselves for those trials and afflictions of spirit which arise from unbelief. It is true that Satan seeks to flood the fair garden of the heart and make it a scene of desolation, but it is also true that many Christians leave open the sluice-gates themselves, and let in the dreadful deluge through carelessness and want of prayer to their strong Helper. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Preserver of it also." Charles Spurgeon

Prayer is a Privilege: Resulting in Praise

Proverbs 8:34 "Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors."

"What if God does not demand prayer as much as give prayer?" Martin Smith

"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty." E.M. Bounds

Hebrews 4:14-16 "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Jesus paid an enormous price in order that we might enjoy the privilege of prayer. He emptied Himself of glory, became a helpless baby, was tempted, endured being judged and put to death by sinful men and most of all He experienced the full wrath of God for our sin. He redeemed a people to be His own, with full rights and privileges. He has opened the way for us to enjoy full and open fellowship with the Father. Ephesians 2:13 "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Not only that He continues to sympathetically plead on our behalf, He knows our every weakness, fear and temptation and He is ready and willing to help.

"It is a throne set up on purpose for the dispensation of grace and from which every utterance is an utterance of grace. The scepter that is stretched out from it is the silver scepter of grace. The decrees proclaimed from it are purposes of grace. The gifts that are scattered down its golden steps are gifts of grace, and He who sits upon the throne is grace Himself. That is the throne of grace that we approach when we pray, it is a mighty source of encouragement to all of us who are praying men and women." Charles Spurgeon

Romans 15:8-11 "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and *in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy*. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "*Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.*"

Psalms 34:8 "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"

Prayer is a Practice: Plan and Persist

"You and I must *desire* to pray, *decide* to pursue it, *determine* to keep at it, and, of course, do it!" Elizabeth George

- Practice increases proficiency, just pray.
- Pray using scripture.

Meditate: “Psalm 1:2 ”...but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

“As [meditation] is the sister of reading, so it is the mother of prayer. Begin with reading and hearing. Go on with meditation; end in prayer...Reading without meditation is unfruitful; meditation without reading is hurtful, to meditate and to read without prayer upon both, is without blessing” William Bridge

“Pray as you think. Consciously embrace with your heart every gleam of light and truth that comes to your mind. Thank God for and pray about everything that strikes you powerfully.” John Owen

Recite: Use the prayers of the Bible as your own.

Reflect on and study the prayers of the Bible.

“...[U]nless we understand the truth of the Word of God, we don't really know how to pray. So that the two ultimate tests for spiritual maturity or spirituality are the study of the Word of God and as a corollary prayer, prayer that is guided by a comprehension of God's truth. And when we study God's Word and discover God's truth, we discover also the real condition of our own hearts, the real condition of our own spiritual lives, and that drives us into a private, personal prayer, where we open up our hearts to God.”

John MacArthur

- Spend time praying with others.
 - Group prayer - Matthew 18:20, Acts 1:13-14, 16:25
 - Corporate prayer - Acts 4:24
- Borrow from the prayers of others. (book of prayers/hymns)
- Gain inspiration from the biographies of others who prayed. (Elizabeth George suggests journaling what you learn.)
- Copy and keep the quotes on prayer that you like whenever you run across them.
- Remember that prayer is a dialogue, ask God questions when they arise.

“Prayer is not a normal part of the life of the natural man. We hear it said that a person's life will suffer if he doesn't pray, but I question that. What will suffer is the life of the Son of God in him, which is nourished not by food, but by prayer. When a person is born again from above, the life of the Son of God is born in him, and he can either starve or nourish that life. Prayer is the way that the life of God in us is nourished. Our common ideas regarding prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer simply as a means of getting things for ourselves, but the biblical purpose of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself.” Oswald Chambers

The Parts of Prayer

Adoration and Praise - to worship, to express reverence and honor, to give glory, to esteem or commend God for what He has done and is doing.

Thanksgiving - to express gratitude. An essential attitude for the believer as it is evidence of a proper understanding of God's gracious dealings in His world.

Confession - acknowledging our sin to God, agreeing with Him, “Yes Lord” and coming to Him to be cleansed and forgiven.

Petition - going to God with our requests. “Let your requests be made known to God...”

Intercession - to plead on behalf of someone. Organize ways to pray for others. Pray scripture.
Listening - to be still before God, pay attention to His words. Seeking God's priorities. Asking questions when reading scripture begin your time in prayer with a request for an open heart and mind to hear God through His Holy Spirit.
Fasting - Utilizes the physical to prepare the spiritual.

The Time of Prayer

- Abraham prayed early at daybreak.
- Jacob wrestled in prayer all night long.
- Samuel prayed all night.
- The Psalms exhort us to pray in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, day and night, with the dawn and in the night watches.
- Various saints in the Bible prayed 3 times a day, even up to 7 times.
- Jesus prayed in the morning, through the night, and at midnight, before eating, in preparation for choosing His disciples, before His greatest trial.⁴

Prayer Principles: Pray at all times.

Practical Advice: Set aside time for daily time in the Word and prayer. As you think about your lifestyle, schedule and demands, what time do you think is best for you to be consistent and faithful in your daily private prayer time? Open and close each day in prayer.

Psalm 92:2 "to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,"
"First thing..and last thing! First word...and last word! They belong to God." Elizabeth George

The Occasions for Prayer

Times of trouble/distress

Times of anxiety

Times for decision making/wisdom

Times of temptation or spiritual battles

Jeremiah 33:3 "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."

Prayer Principle: Pray on every occasion, for every need.

Practical Advice: When waiting:

- Continue praying
- Count your blessings
- Consider fasting

⁴ Adapted from Elizabeth George, *The Heart of a Woman Who Prays*

The Place of Prayer

A private residence, upper room:

Acts 1:13-14 "And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."

Housetop - a place of seclusion:

Acts 10:9 "The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray."

Riverside:

Acts 16:13 "And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together." There was no synagogue in Philippi, but these women found a place to meet together for worship. "...there were none but women, yet a solemn assembly the worshippers of God must have, if by any means it be possible, on the sabbath day... if we have not synagogues, we must be thankful for more private places, and resort to them; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, according as our opportunities are." Matthew Henry

In Prison:

Acts 16:25 "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,"

On the beach!

Acts 21:5 "When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed."

Prayer Principles: Pray anywhere and everywhere.

Practical Advice: Decide where your place will be. Provide what you need.

Consider using a notebook or notecards.

- Orders your prayer
- Helps you remember who and what to pray for
- Serves as a visual reminder of God's faithfulness and goodness as He answers you
- Creates a historical accounting of God's works

The Posture of Prayer

Heads bowed:

Exodus 4:31 "And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Laying on the ground:

2 Sam 12:16 "David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground."

Kneeling with hands outstretched toward heaven:

1 Kings 8:54 "Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven."

Face down/kneeling, lying down:

Matt 26:39 "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Prayer Principle: Engage your whole self when you pray.

Practical Advice: There is no right or wrong posture in which to pray. The people in these examples were physically manifesting the posture of their hearts. Your heart and the specific situation will determine and dictate your posture in prayer.

Pray without Ceasing:

A Privilege: We can come to God anytime, anywhere and pray about anything.

"Pray without ceasing," is, if I read it aright, a most sweet and precious permit to the believer to pour out his heart at all times before the Lord. I hear it's still small voice saying, "Come to the mercy seat, O my child, whenever thou wilt; come to the treasury of grace whenever thou desirest... Nothing, can set a barrier between a praying soul and its God. The road of angels and of prayers is ever open. Let us but send out the dove of prayer and we may be certain that she will return unto us with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. Evermore the Lord hath regard unto the pleadings of his servants, and waiteth to be gracious unto them." Charles Spurgeon

A Precept:

- Never stop praying. "As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing." Spurgeon

"Long as they live must Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."

- Keep and commit to fixed times of devotion.
- Between fixed times of prayer, send up continuous cries.

"While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God; not in twenty sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling, but in broken sentences and interjections. Let short sentences go up to heaven, ay, and we may shoot upwards cries, and single words, such as an "Ah," an "Oh," an "O that;" or, without words we may pray in the upward glancing of the eye or the sigh of the heart. He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand-grenades of godly desire, which he casts forth at every available interval." Spurgeon

- Remain in a spirit of prayer.

Even when not consciously praying, we have a sense of God's presence through the Holy Spirit, being ever sensitive to His leading.

"The heart that prays is the heart that is thinking about God, relating everything that happens every minute throughout the day to God." Elizabeth George

- Let your actions be consistent with your prayers.

"If I seek, as I should do, God's glory above everything, then if all my actions are meant to tend to God's glory, I am continuing to pray, though I may not be praying with my thoughts or with my lips. Oh, that our whole life might be a prayer. It can be. There can be a praying without ceasing before the Lord, though there be many pausings in what [] most [] men would call prayer. Pray then without ceasing, my brother. Let thy whole life be praying. If thou changest the method, yet change not the pursuit; but continue still to worship, still to adore." Spurgeon

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" Corrie ten Boom
Feed your appetite for prayer. - desire
Make a plan. - decide
Stick to the plan. - determine
Pray. - do

Sweet Hour of Prayer

Sweet hour of prayer, Sweet hour of prayer
That calls me from a world of care
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known
In seasons of distress and grief
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By Thy return, sweet hour of prayer

Sweet hour of prayer, Sweet hour of prayer
The joys I feel, the bliss I share
Of those whose anxious spirits burn
With strong desires for Thy return
With such I hasten to the place
Where God my Savior shows His face
And gladly take my station there
And wait for Thee, sweet hour of prayer

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

- William W. Walford

Discussion

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

1Thessalonians 5:11

1. What is God teaching you through this study on prayer?

2. What insights have you gained from God's Word regarding prayer?

3. Have you changed any of your daily devotional or prayer habits?
Such as:
 - Journaling
 - Setting aside a specific time
 - Setting aside a specific place
 - Any additional resources/prompts (hymn books, book of prayers)
 - Changing up the order of your devotional time
 - Asking questions
 - Listening
 - Praying Scripture

4. Each week a different “Element of Prayer” was presented in the Prayer Practice section of your handout. Were any of these new to you? Did you implement anything new? What was the result? (Elements of prayer: Scriptural Intake and Meditation, Adoration and Praise, Listening, Thanksgiving, Intercession, Confession, Fasting)

5. What answers to prayer have you received recently? How did you respond? What did they teach you about the character of God?

6. As we conclude this study on prayer, what are your plans for continuing to improve/defend your prayer life? (Consider setting aside a special time in prayer to ask God what He would have for you in this area. Then set realistic and measurable goals for 2020.)

Elements of Prayer: Petition

“You do not have because you do not ask.” James 4:2b

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened unto you:”
Matthew 7:7

“Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive,
that your joy may be full.” John 16:24

Definition:

A solemn earnest request for ourselves. The Hebrew and Greek words that generally are used for “prayer” mean “to request” or “to make petition”.

Purpose of Petition:

Petitioning God is declaring our total dependence on Him; like a little child is dependent on its father. “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

Examples from Scripture:

Abraham - Genesis 15

Hannah - 1 Samuel 1

David - Psalms

Paul - Epistles

Way to Petition:

- Spoken words
- In the heart
- Through written words

Practical Tips:

- Have an attitude of seeking the will of God in all things.
- Ask God what He wants you to ask for.
- Never hesitate to share the desires of your heart, asking God to purify your motives.
- Record your petitions and the answers to your petitions.
- Make observations about the kinds of petitions the characters in the Bible make to God and how He answers them.

Refine Women's Ministry

Seasons of Prayer - Fall 2019

Resource List*

Books

E.M. Bounds on Prayer, E.M. Bounds (Whitaker House,1997)
The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer, (Baker Book House,1990)
God's Best Secrets, Andrew Murray (Whitaker House,1998)
Spurgeon on Prayer and Spiritual Warfare, Charles Spurgeon (Whitaker House,1998)
The Heart of a Woman Who Prays, Elizabeth George (Harvest House,2012)
Becoming a Woman of Prayer, Cynthia Heald (Navpress,1996)
A Praying Life, Paul E. Miller (Navpress,2009)
Living a Prayerful Life, Andrew Murray (Bethany House,2002)
The Valley of Vision a Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, Edited by Arthur Bennet (1975)
Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Donald S. Whitney (Navpress,1991)
Unpacking Forgiveness, Chris Brauns (Crossway,2008)
On Our Knees, Susan Heck, (Focus Publishing,2009)

Biographical Studies

A. W. Tozer
Spurgeon
Andrew Murray
David Livingston
Adoniram Judson
Amy Carmichael
Hudson Taylor
Jim & Elizabeth Elliot
George Mueller
David Brainerd

*Remember that the first and final authority on prayer is God's Word. The books above, as they are authored by flawed people, should be read with discernment.

1 John 4:1 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God,"