



**The Effectual Fruitful Life:
Principles of Prayer**

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**THE FRUITFUL EFFECTIVE LIFE:
PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER**

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THE FRUITFUL EFFECTIVE LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Every born again believer is called to have a fruitful life overflowing with prosperity physically, spiritually and financially. Prayer is a key requirement to producing eternal fruit. This paper outlines aspects of prayer that the Word states if followed will help you to develop a productive, effective life. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:1-2).

Every Christian becomes part of the vine when they are born again and expected to produce. The vinedresser referenced here would be the same as a farmer or green house keeper today. God will purge anything dead or not producing fruit from the vine. We all need pruning but it is critical to produce and build the Kingdom of God. As Christians, we need to purge anything that ties up time and is not producing quality results unless you like the idea of being "taken away" by the Creator. Living a barren life is serious. There is no life, heritage or future in barrenness.

God expects us to produce. This has not been conveyed properly in Christian circles. When I was a child, all I heard was you are going to hell for sin so you better watch out. It is commonly known as "hell fire and brimstone" preaching without any teaching on the goodness of God. Many churches went from the "hell fire" ditch to the other ditch of enjoy life and come to church when you can. We are called to attend

church and serve the Kingdom. A key aspect of serving the Kingdom is producing fruit which requires prayer.

Many people have the attributes of fruit from a distance but produce no fruit. Jesus spoke to the hypocritical fig tree in Matthew 21:20. It looked like it was producing from a distance but when the Master got close it was just leaves. Fruitfulness may require changing. Green leaves look good on a fig tree but are worthless if the tree never produces. It's like rolling back the covers and finding nothing there.

Many Christians look that way from a distance and talk about prayer and make statement's that they will pray for someone but never actually pray. One of the enemies' tricks is to get us to procrastinate knowing that many times, we never act on what God instructed. In order to produce fruit, you must feed from the vine.

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:3)

Today, we may not say “abide in” but may say to live in or dwell in. If a Christian is not producing fruit, they must not be communing with God as much as they may think. It is pretty serious if not producing from God's perspective. God is not holding things back from you, but are you praying and asking according to His Word? Prayer is not the most important aspect of the Christian life or even the foundation. The Word is first and all prayer should be based upon the will of God in accordance to the Word. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This scripture enlightens us that the Word became flesh, not that prayer became flesh.

This paper outlines various aspects of prayer based upon the Word with the intention to help you produce fruit and obtain results through prayer. It also provides insight into things that may delay or prevent your prayers from manifesting.

I. WHAT IS PRAYER

Much of the world has an incorrect idea of prayer. The Webster’s Dictionary states that prayer is the act of asking for a favor, a solemn address to the Supreme Being, consisting of adoration, confession of our sins, supplication for mercy and forgiveness, intercession for blessings on others, and thanksgiving.

I have heard people state "Prayer is talking to God." Well, it's more than the Webster’s Dictionary definition or just talking to God. Too many people just talk to God and don't pray. Prayer is not just talking to God. Prayer is communion with God. It is talking with God and not just talking to God.

You may like to talk to Jesus but that is not necessarily prayer. Can you talk to me without praying to me? “Real prayer is genuine communication. Religious form, however, is a type of manipulation” (Hammond 54).

Communing with someone requires both parties talking and listening. When you have dinner with a friend, there's a sharing of ideas, thoughts and feelings, and you're aware of the presence of the other party. It’s not one party lecturing the other. We certainly don't lecture God. We talk to Him. We ask Him things. We ought to do a lot of listening. The one who knows the most should do the most talking.

House of Prayer

Jesus quoted a passage from Isaiah fifty-six in the Gospel accounts. Jesus was angry over the lack of honor and holiness in the house of God. The church is to be a place for all people to worship God. It is not intended to be a place of business.

"Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, And to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants — Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant — 7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:6-7).

God said he was going to bring in folks that were strangers to the church. They were strangers to God and the covenant, but He's bringing them into the house of God.

Jesus went into the temple where it had been made a place of merchandise, and their main focus was not serving God but it was buying and selling. It had an atmosphere of a market place or a store. This aggravated the Lord. You'll see one of the strongest demonstrations of righteous anger in this situation. He grabbed tables and He gave them a fling and He got a little whip and He drove out the livestock. "And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Matthew 21:13).

Every church ought to be a house of prayer. Every place of God where God has control including your house should be a house of prayer. That does that mean that you are on your knees all the time. The atmosphere and environment should be one amenable to prayer. A house of prayer has the environment of the awareness of God and His presence.

Prayer for the Sick

As believers and leaders, we are to pray for sick people in faith. Sickness and death are enemies of God. Much of the ministry of Jesus was healing the sick. I believe one of the most misunderstood scriptures about prayer is if it is God's will to heal. It is clear that it is the will of God in the Gospels. "And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3 Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matthew 8:2-3).

The Word gives us direction how to pray for the sick. Many people ask for prayer when they are challenged without utilizing any faith of their own. They want other people to use their faith while they coast. Jesus said many times "let it be according to your faith." It was not based upon God's ability or the faith of Jesus. In James, we are instructed to pray if we are suffering. It does not say to call prayer lines. I am not saying prayer lines are not good, but they should not be a crutch used when people are too lazy to stand in faith and spend time in prayer for themselves.

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit" (James 5:13-18).

Notice that the scripture does not say that if you are suffering to call a hot line, tell all your friends in Facebook. It is critical to be united in prayer with Christians who are in faith with you.

The enemy endeavors to get ministers worn down by getting them to spend time doing unfruitful work. The Word in James five, verse fourteen above says that if you are sick to call the elders of the church for prayer. Earlier in ministry, a friend asked me to go see a family member in the hospital and pray over them for healing. They were in a very bad state of health. I went at their request. When I entered the hospital, I discovered that they individual in the hospital did not value the Word of God and did not even believe there was a God. They were not open to hearing any scripture or prayer. In the home town of Jesus, people did not believe he was the Messiah so he could do no mighty work in the city where his childhood friends lived.

The Young's Literal Translation gives clarity to the meaning of verse fourteen. "is any infirm among you?" (James 5:14 YLT). The word infirm here means indisposed. Today, it would be someone who was in the Intensive Care Unit, not a sore throat. Someone with a sore throat can pray for themselves. A person who is in dire straits needs help. This verse is instructing elders to pray for healing for those too weak to pray for themselves or for babies, naturally or spiritually, who don't know how or what to pray. I have found out that if you can have the sick person whom you are praying for apply faith to their level and unite my faith with them that the success rate increases. As a result I have them start the prayer if they are able. I am not saying we should not pray for people or not to check up on people, but the Word says they should ask. Asking opens up the door and gives legal right.

When people come to church services and there is a prayer line for healing, they are already acting in faith. "Many times Brother Copeland would pray in the Holy Ghost before he would lay hands on someone. The Bible teaches that when we pray in the Holy

Ghost, we build ourselves up in our most holy faith (see Jude 1:20). Brother Copeland knew that when he was praying for the sick, it was essential to wait until that faith was at its highest.” (Savelle 29). We can pray and apply faith in these services with great expectancy for the manifestation of miracles.

The Prayer of Faith in Love

Prayer needs to be specific. Jesus fought temptations by “It is written.” The Master had scriptures for what he prayed. This allowed him to pray in Faith. As a child, the pastor of our local church asked people if they had any spoken or unspoken prayer requests. There is no scripture to support unspoken prayer requests. When you go to the Lord, you need to be in faith. You cannot hook your faith with a prayer request that you don’t even know if it is God’s will. “Faith begins where the will of God is known.” (Bosworth 47).

When you pray for others, it is critical to pray in faith with love. A few years ago, my wife and I entered BBQ restaurant when my wife saw a young lady wearing a wedding dress. My wife congratulated her and asked if we could pray for her and her new groom. The bride smiled and said that would be great. About that time, the restroom door opened and there stood the groom in a beautiful tux. As the groom departed the ladies restroom, my wife did not miss a beat but gave her a big hug. This was an opportunity to judge or love. It’s the goodness of God that draws men to repentance. The Lord led me to pray in love according to the scripture. “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9-10). These two ladies

received our prayer and stated that we were the only nice Christians they had met. This allowed the Word of God to be spoken and prayed over them which gave God a legal right to minister to them in love. If they are filled with His wisdom and walk worth of the Lord, then their lifestyle will change to God's Glory.

After you pray in faith in accordance with the Word, it is critical to stay in faith. Stand on the Word and remain in faith until you receive the manifestation. We are faith believers and not moved what feelings or sight. "Doubt is from the devil. You have to resist doubts and rebuke them. You have to get your mind on the answer – on God's Word" (Hagin 5).

Prayer for Church Services and Ministry Meetings

It is critical to pray for church services, outreaches and ministers who are leading your services. We need to ask God for open doors to share the Gospel. A few years ago, I was ministering at a funeral for an outlaw biker. Just before the service started, the president of the bike club told me not to preach. The dilemma was how can a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ perform a funeral without talking about eternal life but if I did, it would likely close the door to minister to the club in the future. Prior to attending the service, we held a prayer meeting and asked the Lord to open doors and gave Him thanks in faith for divine appointments. "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:2).

When I was instructed not to mention God, I instructed the friends who were with me to pray in the Spirit. The Lord reminded me what we asked according to His Word.

The service started and the first thing I said was “he brought people closer to God.” A few members of the club pulled out weapons. The Lord led me to share how when people knew he was headed to their house to take care of business that they were on their knees asking God for mercy because he was a tough man. Members of the club said “Preach it man.” The door was open! At the close of the service, people received the Lord as their savior. The Word sets free. It opens the door for the manifestation of God’s glory but it takes prayer in faith accordance with the Word to God a legal right to move on our behalf.

Prayer for Spiritual Maturity

God desires us to mature and grow up spiritually. Baby, weak Christians cannot teach, mature and build the Body of Christ. They need teachers, spiritual parents to help them mature so they can run their race. Leaders should give thanks with joy that the Lord will complete the work He has begun in their sheep. “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:3-6). The Lord has directed us to pray in faith that God will complete what He started.

In May, 2002, I was in an accident racing motorcycles. At that time, I was the chaplain for the drag racing circuit. After I was life-flighted, my wife, Shara stood on Philippians one verse six and gave the Lord thanks for completing the work in my life.

Apostle Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus after he became aware of their faith in the Lord Jesus.

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Ephesians 1:15-19).

Notice, Paul did not pray this for those who were not believers. If people get more light and understanding they grow in boldness. Light produces holiness and direction which will lead people to spiritual prosperity and growth. I speak this verse in prayer as I travel and preach.

The Timothy Prayer

Timothy exhorts or urges us to pray and defines four specific prayer types or areas to pray. “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). The first type mentioned are supplications and comes from the Greek word *deesis* (deh'-ay-sis) which we get the English word petition and means to make a request, to ask, meet sense of need.

The second type mentioned is Prayers which comes from the Greek word *proseuche* (pros-yoo-khay'); which means by implication, an oratory or to pray earnestly, to supplicate or worship.

The third type in this verse is Intercessions which comes from the Greek word *enteuxis* (ent'-yook-sis) which means to interview, supplicate, or to make intercession.

The fourth type mentioned is Giving of Thanks, which comes from the Greek word *eucharistia* (yoo-khar-is-tee'-ah); which means to give gratitude; to actively be grateful language to God, as an act of worship. Thankfulness is a very overlooked yet important aspect of prayer. Twenty-five percent of prayer should be giving of thanks.

In First Timothy, we learn that it is God's will and desire that all men be saved from the pits of hell. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). We can pray in faith for loved ones to be saved and ask the Lord for laborers to minister the Gospel.

II. WHAT PRAYER IS NOT

Many Christians think they are praying but it is not communing with God at all. Many people's prayer time is filled with chatter rather than communing with God. And the key to greater prayer is a greater awareness of God. We need a greater awareness of who we are talking to and that He is listening.

Prayer is not counting beads. There is no scripture in the Bible where we are instructed to count beads or even a discussion about counting beads when you pray. It is critical to pray in alignment with scripture in faith.

Praying with Yourself

If God does not hear you, what is the benefit of your prayer? It is a waste of time and energy. This is more common than people think and the root is prideful and judgmental attitudes. It happened two thousand years ago and occurs today. Jesus dealt with it the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

Pharisees were the most religious, strict sect of the Jews. You might have called them the word people of their day. They were big on quoting and following the law. The Pharisee prayed with himself and was not in communion with God. He called it prayer. It states that he went up to pray but he was communing with himself. He was impressed with himself for being holy and a tither. God said he was praying with himself with a selfish, arrogant attitude.

Publicans were known for being greedy and religious. They commonly stuck people in business deals, lied about people and hurt people. Today, we may call them sinners, partiers and heavy drinkers. The publican was really talking to God. It was from his heart. “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). A righteous man is a man who is doing what is right. He was sincere. “God have mercy on me.” God accepted it. He was talking with God. He was communing with God. And God heard it and God answered.

Prayer Manipulation

We are to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. If your prayer is intended to get a response from the emotions of those who hear you, then you need to check your heart. For example, if I asked a group of believers to bow their heads so we can pray and I said “Heavenly Father. I need \$500. Deal with these people to sow into me.” Who would I really be talking to? I would be praying to the group over God’s shoulder. I would not be talking to God but trying to manipulate people.

Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

We need to be cautious not to take credit for the results of prayer. There is a difference from being honest with humility and being in pride and taking credit. If you prayed and God answered the prayer, you had a part. For example, if you prayed for a lost friend to get saved and they got saved you should not make statements like “I prayed them into the Kingdom.” What about God who gave you the strength and light to pray, Jesus who died for them, the pastors who taught you the Word and many other people who may have planted seeds in their life? Paul made this clear in First Corinthians.

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Considering Paul penned a large portion of the New Testament and did not take credit and Jesus said he could do nothing without the Father, how much credit can you take for your prayers being answered? It is an honor to know the Lord heard you and answered you.

Quoting Scriptures

People quoting scriptures is not necessarily prayer. Many times they are rambling and jumping from topic to topic without actually praying. They’re not talking to God. They’re just trying to impress people with their spirituality.

In John 16:23 Jesus is speaking. “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23). Jesus is talking about the day that you and I live in, the day of the New Covenant. There are the two big answers to Who we pray to and how we pray. We pray

to The Father God in the name of Jesus. It does not say to quote scriptures in the name of Jesus but to ask.

Many times, people are trying to convince God to get Him to do something on their behalf. We need scriptures to stand on when we pray. "No one can build a successful prayer life if he doesn't know the Word. A successful prayer life is built and based upon the written Word of God" (Hagin 228).

Repetitive Prayers

How many times do you have to tell God what your problem is before He gets it? "Oh God, I got to have a thousand dollars. I got to have a thousand dollars. I got to have it by this Friday. I got to have it, Lord. Oh God, a thousand. Oh God, I got have a thousand. Oh God... oh God if You could move." This is not prayer, or even a faith filled request. It is drama that will get results. God knows we have needs. We need to ask in faith then give thanks.

Going over and over a problem. Rehashing the problem for hours is not prayer. People call it prayer but lying in your bed and crying all night "Oh God, oh God, oh God. Oh, God..." is not prayer. Repetition of stating His name for hours and feeling sorry for yourself has nothing to do with prayer. We are to come to the throne with boldness, not as a beggar.

Prayer is not yelling at the devil. There's a time to take authority over the enemy, but when you're doing that, you're not talking to God. Yelling repeatedly at the devil is not prayer. Prayer is communion with God. There is a time to rebuke and shut down the schemes of the enemy. We have authority as believers.

III. HIS WILL

Faith, boldness, confidence begins where the will of God is known. Confidence is a boldness. If you are not confident, you will not be bold. You cannot pray His will if you don't know it. His will is revealed by His Word. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15). There are various translations that help make this verse clear. "And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely asking according to his will, sure that he's listening. 15 And if we're confident that he's listening, we know that what we've asked for is as good as ours" (1 John 5:14 The Message).

You will not have confidence in your request if don't know if it is God's will. It is just a plea. Believers should not be beggars. "Step one is to decide what you want from God and find scriptures that promise you the things you desire. Step number two to receiving answered prayer is ask God for the things you want and believe that you receive them" (Hagin 3). Immature faith people, baby Christians try to manipulate God and convince Him. There are no spiritual shortcuts, formulas, or four step programs to get God to hear your prayers. "It's only fair to warn you that even though your heart delights in flowing with the Holy Spirit and being wholly dependent upon Him, your fleshly nature does not. It gravitates toward forms and formulas" (Hammond 52). Prayer is not a weapon to force God to make good on His promises.

True prayer is founded upon finding and coming into agreement with God's will. Ask according to His will with confidence that what we ask is already ours. "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). It is

very unwise to pray not knowing if it lines up with the word of God. Other translations and versions make this very clear. For example, “Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants” (Ephesians 5:17 THE MESSAGE). “Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:17 Amplified). It is foolish to ask the Lord to do things he has already done in His Word. Many times, rather than praying, we need to receive the promises of God and walk in faith.

Prayer Request for Deliverance

I have had many people ask me to pray for Christians to be delivered of drugs, alcohol and other devices. If they are believers, the Word says that God has already delivered them and need to walk worthy of the Lord.

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you...9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:3, 9-14).

Notice that in verse three, we are instructed to give thanks. Faith gives thanks to God for the answer before it is seen. According to these verses, we are to pray for our brothers and sisters to walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him. If they are living in the light and walking a life worthy of the high calling of Jesus Christ, any sins will be dealt with in their lives. They have a choice to serve God and only they can make the

choice, but we can pray and believe God that they are fulfilling their call. It is clear in verse twelve that we are to thank Him for being partakers of things not happened yet.

Verse thirteen states that He has already delivered us. If he has already done something, we do not need to ask the Lord to do it because it is already done. He has already delivered us. Pray for revelation of His will, knowledge, spiritual understanding. He who the Son sets free is free indeed. This is the will of God.

If your family and loved ones are in the perfect will of God they are protected and maturing in the Lord. It should be our hearts desire and prayer for all mankind to live according to the Word and fulfill their destiny. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12). The word perfect here is not what is commonly thought of in the English language. There was only man without sin, Jesus Christ. The use of perfect here means to grow up, mature and be completed. Our prayers in faith will open the Lord to strengthen our brothers and sisters in the Lord to mature in the things of God. I encourage you to pray this over your congregation and your family.

IV. WHEN PRAYERS FAIL

A key reason for failed prayers was answered in section III above. You must according to the will of God. God always answered the prayers of his people, but sometimes His answer is no. Other times, His answer is a directive to act in an area that seems to have nothing to do with the prayer, but the answer and solution is received as you act in obedience.

As children of God, we are instructed to enter the throne room with boldness. We can be bold because we are confidence. It is impossible to please God without faith and confidence is an indication of bold faith. Condemnation is a confidence killer. It destroys our faith and prevents Christians from reigning. If you do not have confidence toward God, you will not have faith that God has heard you and that you have what you requested. “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

Sin will keep Christians from entering the throne room. Sin is violation of light. The more darkness you have in your life, the harder it is to hear from God. If you are not getting prayers answered that are clearly the will of God, sin can be a root hindrance.

God looks at our hearts. We need to check our hearts continually to make sure there is nothing there that would hinder or hurt the work of the Holy Spirit. Repent for all rebellion, bitterness, and un-forgiveness.

God is merciful and wants to answer your requests, but did you ask in faith? Many times, sin prevents people from even asking. “Remember this: you cannot be weak in spirit and strong in prayer. That is a complete impossibility, for real prayer requires you to become a co-laborer with God” (Hammond 84). God counted us worthy due to the blood of Jesus. Ask with expectation. It is by faith through grace that we receive, not our works.

Prayer does work! God does not fail us. He never has and never will. “God hears and answers prayers. You might as well settle that. The Word works. Too much of the

time people just make a little stab in the dark at praying. They call it praying, and then they let it go. In other words, they just hope something will work out some way or somehow. But we need to firmly take our stand on God's Word and let heaven, hell and the earth know that God's Word is true and that we believe it. (Hagin 26).

Prayer Request for Enemies

Jesus first statement on prayer was to pray for our enemies. This was a challenging thought for the Hebrews. Under the law in the Old Testament, you don't find love, grace or forgiveness. You find retribution and judgement. "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death" (Ex 21:12). King David even prayed against his enemies. This is why it was so radical when Jesus came on the scene and said to pray for your enemies and to love those who persecute you.

The Master referred to the law to judgement but directed us to love instead of retribution. ("You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'" (Matthew 5:38-39). Stephen was a great example as the first martyr when he prayed for those killing him.

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. 6 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

You cannot violate this scripture to pray for your enemies, then run around asking people to pray for you and expect to get results. Someone else's faith is not going to

work for you as long as you are harboring things in your heart against someone else.

Excuses do not matter. You must be a doer of the Word according to James 1:22-25.

V. FASTING AND PRAYER

We find prayer and fasting directives in the Old and New Testaments. Some challenges require more than praying. Jesus fasted often and entered into prayer. In Ezra, we find where the people prayed and fasted for protection.

“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer” (Ezra 8:21-23).

Prayer and fasting is found throughout the scripture as a sacrificial form of prayer that produces results that prayer alone does not. When the demoniac was delivered by Jesus in Mark nine, the Lord said it required prayer and fasting.

VI. INTERCESSION

Intercessory prayer is prayer for someone or something other than ourselves. Simply put, it is pleading the cause of another before God.

Intercession translated from the Hebrew or Greek defines it as: to prophesy, or invade by violence, to struggle in prayer, or contend with an adversary, to fight or labor fervently, with force, crowd and press forward, to travail.

Purposes of Intercessory Prayer

As an intercessor you stand between the enemy and whatever you are interceding for that the enemy is attacking. Three main purposes of intercessory prayer according to

the scriptures are to stand in the gap on behalf of others; to birth the purposes of God through the Church, and; to provide protection for the work and the workers of God.

Standing in the Gap

When Job was going through his tribulation, he longed for someone to connect him with God. “Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor” (Job 16:21). This is a prime example of intercession. It is pleading the cause of another before God.

Birthing the Purposes of God

A second purpose of intercessory prayer is to birth the purposes of God in our lives and in the church. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Paul said, “The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). “Groanings” is the same word used of a woman bringing a child into the world. It is describing the Spirit seizing us with such a strong anointing that we make birth-like groanings.

Protection

Thirdly intercession is to provide covering and protection for the purposes and work of God. Paul went through tremendous tribulation while in Asia according to Corinthians 1:8, 9 and 11. When we go into the enemy’s camp and challenge the works of darkness, there will be demonic forces there to resist us. But we can always triumph in Christ if we believe and follow His Word.

It is wise to cover missionaries with intercession when we send them out to the harvest fields of the world. We should pray for their protection as well as the work of

God to be completed by intercession. Because of intercession, Peter was set free; the angel of the Lord came and turned him loose.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we will review keys to effective prayer. Prayer must be in accordance with the Word and done in faith. Remember it is communion with God. Research the Word and find a scripture to stand on in faith. Jesus fought temptations by “It is written.” This allowed him to pray in Faith. We need to be selective in prayers to make sure you are praying in faith and not in unbelief. When you pray, be real and sincere unlike the Pharisee. After you pray, give thanks in faith that God heard you and you have received. After you pray in faith and give thanks, watch your tongue. Don’t cancel your prayers with faithless words.

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