

# PRAYER AND FASTING:

## “Just do it!”



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Lessons on prayer designed  
to help you be a more  
effective and successful  
Prayer Warrior.

# Prayer and Fasting:

## "Just do it!"

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# INTRODUCTION

Lessons 1-5



Lord, Teach Us to  
Pray...

LESSON ONE:

## what is PRAYER?

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**GOAL:** To clearly define prayer and its purpose.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Luke 11:1

Prayer: One of our greatest blessings and one of our biggest struggles. Prayer is one of the greatest blessings God offers, but it is also a source of frustration and guilt.

However, a life filled with prayer is a life of great blessing. Prayer should project the full range of human emotions, from exuberant joy to frantic despair. Prayer gives strength.

The Bible teaches that we serve a God who is simply looking for opportunities to pour out his blessings on us (Leviticus 26:3-6; Deuteronomy 28:2-6,12; II Samuel 12:7-9).

God listens for your unique voice every day. We can see the theme that God is ready and willing to share His resources with his people all through the Old Testament. In the New Testament this concept is extended and made even more precious.

Jesus taught us to call God "**Father**," actually, Papa. The most repeated prayer in the Christian church begins, "**Our Father...**"

God loved us so much that He called us His sons (I John 3:1,2).

**And since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.** (See Galatians 4:7.)

In Romans 8:16-17 God has adopted us as His sons and daughters. Therefore what is His is ours (we are heirs). Most fathers love to be generous with their children. Jesus understood this, and that is why he used fathers to explain God's generosity (Matthew 7:9-11).

If imperfect fathers love to bestow blessings (gifts) on their children, imagine how our perfect Father in heaven must delight in giving good gifts to us, His beloved children. No one's voice sounds sweeter to God than yours.

### IF WE DON'T, HE WON'T

- Jeremiah 33:3

We must recognize the nature of prayer. It is not just asking God for something. **Prayer is a relationship; it is abiding in the presence of the Lord. Prayer is the most intimate communion with God.**

**God will not do what we do not ask!** (James 4:2, 3) We must daily send our praises up before God. Realizing:

1. God is not a distant God but an ever present God (Isaiah 59:1).
2. Prayer is an incense before God (Revelation 5:8; 8:4).

God loves prayers so much that He likens it to a sweet smelling incense to His nostrils.

- ❖ Psalm 141:2 - "Let my prayer be set before you as incense."
- ❖ Exodus 30:7, 8 - Every morning and evening an incense should be sent up to our God. Nowadays, we do not need Aaron; for we are spiritual priests and offer up spiritual sacrifices unto Him.

How can we have fellowship with God without prayer? We cannot.

Prayer is not only talking to God but communicating to God.

**We can know the mind of God! (I John 1:3)**

## **GIVING GOD OUR ATTENTION IS VITAL TO PRAYER**

Three essential elements for a fruitful and fulfilling prayer life can be found in

Psalm 54:2:           (1)    **God**  
                              (2)    **Believer**  
                              (3)    **Communication**

- Take away any one of these and prayer is impossible.
- Without God no one listens.
- Without the believer no one speaks.
- Without communication, nothing is said.

## **THE RECIPIENT OF PRAYER**

Our ordinary conversations reflect our attitudes toward the listener, and the same is true in prayer.

Our thoughts and attitudes about God largely determine how we speak to Him. We need to continually deepen and clarify our concept of God so our communication with Him will grow in quality and value.

Christians adjust their communication with God to match their perception of Him. How BIG is your God?

**The recipient of prayer is GOD.**

## THE SOURCE OF PRAYER

Prayer always involves a human source. We must learn how to “**speak to ourselves**” when we pray.

Self-awareness is a very important part of prayer. What are my attitudes, ideas, and circumstances?

## THE WORDS OF COMMUNICATION

We must be conscious of our words to God when we pray. Variety in prayer is vital to effective communication with God.

Following the same pattern again and again will destroy a prayer life, just as surely as it destroys an earthly conversation.

**Believers** should pay attention to themselves in prayer because they **are the source of prayer**. The more aware we are of ourselves, the more sincere our prayers will become.

## why PRAY?

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Why should we pray? Does God need help? Is He not able to do anything He desires? Is He not self-sufficient? Careful reading of Ezekiel 22:30-31 can help answer these questions.

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

“Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.”

*It is very apparent from this reading that God desired to avoid exercising just and deserved judgment. He actually sought for someone to ask, to intercede, that judgment be diverted. Finding no one, God, bound by His own justice, meted out deserved judgment. If no one intercedes, God must exercise judgment when He does not want to. Why is this? His justice demands judgment. His love seeks an intercessor to intervene.*

*God does nothing in the realm of human redemption outside of the plan of prayer and intercession. This is underscored by many Biblical references to prayer and multiple entreaties, urgings and invitations for us to pray. A translation of Matthew 7:7 says, “Ask, I ask you to ask – seek, I entreat you to seek, knock, I urge you to knock.” The importance of prayer is made evident as there are 667 references to prayer found in the Bible. God invites us, urges us, and commands us to pray.*

*Furthermore, the importance of prayer is underscored by God’s binding Himself to unequivocally answer. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14). “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).*

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23-24). “...ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2b).*

*In light of this, the entire responsibility for prayerlessness or ineffective prayer must rest on us. His promises to answer are always circumscribed by His will, but any truly yielded child of God would never will anything outside of God’s will. So, there is no “small print” on God’s part in the plan of prayer.*



The plan of prayer is God inviting man into partnership with Him to implement His word and will in the affairs of men. Man does have a will. God tells us that whatever we bind or loose on earth, the same will be done in heaven. (See Matthew 16:19.) In Luke 10:19, we are told that He has given us power (authority) over things on earth. We are the “deputies” with full authority.

The scheme of prayer also encompasses God’s plan to fulfill His purpose for a bride that will rule and reign with Him. Prayer becomes the training arena. It is the apprenticeship for the eternal position of ruling and reigning. We practice enforcing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. We bind, loose, agree on earth and reign in life! God will not act without our exercising our will in prayer to intercede for His will to be done. He will not sabotage His training program to bring us into full stature, into our inheritance of the ruling, eternal partnership with Him. His part is complete and He gives us the opportunity, through prayer, to enter into this partnership as joint heirs with God.

John Wesley said, “God will do nothing but in answer to prayer.” S.D. Gordon said, “The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is to pray” and “you can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

Prayer is – should be – the main business of the church.

Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is entering into partnership, “joint heirs,” with God. What He has willed in the heavens can be done on the earth. His word that is settled in heaven completes its circuit on earth as we declare in prayer, with faith believing, that His word is true.

God has declared His intentions, His will in Jeremiah 25, “...Because ye have not heard my words...land shall be a desolation...shall serve the King of Babylon seventy years. I will recompense them according to their deeds....” Years later, Daniel reads the prophecy of Jeremiah and realizes the time for deliverance from Babylon is near and sets himself to seek the Lord by prayer and fasting for the fulfillment of the prophecy. The prophetic promise had to be prayed into fulfillment. God declared His will from His eternal perspective. Man prayed it into earthly reality!

In Exodus 25, after the incident of the children of Israel worshiping, the golden calf, God’s intentions were to consume them in the fury of His anger. Moses interceded on the basis of the covenant promise made to Abraham God spared the people.

God’s law and justice dictate judgment and consequences. God’s love and mercy wait patiently for an intercessor to plead the case. God’s word is settled in heaven. Our prayers bring them to reality in the earth. As we pray. “Thy Kingdom come,” our prayers become the discipline training of our future ruling and reigning with Him.

Why pray? God waits for our will to bring His will to earth.

## the Problem with Prayer

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**GOAL:** To try and identify some common problems with prayer and give solutions.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 59:1, 2

As mentioned in our first lesson, "Prayer is one of the greatest blessings God offers, but it is also a source of frustration and guilt."

### A SERVANT'S GAZE

Often it is easy to get our eyes on the size of our problem instead of realizing the size of our GOD. An effective prayer life is developed through a "Servant's Gaze."

As servants of God, we are in utter need of His provision. His hand alone comes between us and eternal death. Only when we acknowledge our complete dependence upon God can we begin to enter prayer with a proper focus on God.

A fruitful, life-giving prayer rests firmly on the foundation of recognizing our need for God; it begins with the attitude of a dependent servant.

**Our focus in prayer should be God. When we focus too much on what we need, we are bound to neglect the ONE whom we need.**

Sometimes, when we pray, little attention is given to God. We mention Him at the beginning and end of our prayer, and we even use His name throughout the prayer "Lord...Lord...Lord...." But apart from the beginning and ending of a prayer, and a few phrases in between, our focus is not really on God. **In a ten minute prayer we will usually spend less than sixty seconds focusing primarily on God.** Our mind wanders off on many different activities of and/or for the day and we list off all our request. Then we are finished our prayer.

### ADDRESSING GOD

The values of addressing God with commonly used names and titles are at first, fresh, rich and hold much significance. However, the danger in this is as times goes on the names become familiar terms and lose their freshness. When addressing God in prayer, use names relevant to your present situation.

Different people need God in different ways. For instance: to the fatherless He becomes a father, and to the lonely He becomes a friend.

Some of the many ways the Bible addresses God are as follows: Morning Star; Alpha and Omega; Firstborn of Creation; Righteous Judge; Advocate; King of kings; Prince of Peace; Chief Cornerstone; and Lamb of God.

Our words express what is in our hearts. Our words will either hinder or enhance our communication with God. Therefore, we should be very conscious and aware of what we are saying when we pray.

**Read Psalm 56:1-13**

Answer the following questions

- (a) List three ways the psalmist thinks about God.  
Mercy, Avenger, Deliverer
  
- (b) List three ways how the psalmist shows awareness of himself in prayer.
  - 1 - Uses the personal pronoun "I" and "ME" a lot.
  - 2 - Acknowledges "HIS" need for help.
  - 3 - Personally gives God the praise(s) due His name.
  
- (c) Give three points that show how this prayer differs from your usual pattern of prayer.
  - 1 - Starts with a plea unto God for help.
  - 2 - Repeats his praise to God at the end.
  - 3 - Ask God about the final outcome of his enemies and his own welfare.

**(NOTE:** These answers may vary depending on how a person prays.)

Before bringing a request to God, ask yourself these questions. If God granted this request,

- Would it bring Him glory?
- Would it advance His kingdom?
- Would it help people?
- Would it help me to grow spiritually?

**Some malfunction (sin) in our lives is blocking our prayers; even the appropriate, well-timed ones.**

Three possible reasons why prayers are not answered.

- 1 The request may be inappropriate.
- 2 The timing may be off.
- 3 The problem lies within ourselves.  
(for example, sin; bad attitude)

God is committed to developing people who will reflect His character in this world, and His character always expresses concern and compassion for the afflicted. (Isaiah 58:3-9; Proverbs 21:13)

If your ear is open to the afflicted, God will keep His ear open to you.

The more you are convinced of God's ability, the more He demonstrates His power to you. How big is your perception of God?

Ways in which God speaks to us:

- (1) Through His Word
- (2) Through people
- (3) Leading of the Holy Spirit

When we pray, there will be times or there should be times when God will lead us by His Holy Spirit. God will only talk to us when we are willing to listen. In your prayer time, take time to simply listen for the voice of God.

#### **How can we know if the leadings are from God?**

1. All leadings that come from God are consistent with His Word.
2. God's leadings are usually consistent with the person He made you to be.
3. God's leadings usually involve servant hood.
4. It normally requires some sacrifice or steps of faith.

Sometimes we stop praying because we do not believe God is able to meet the need. Often, **our prayers are weak because our faith is weak!** We must believe with and in our heart that there is **POWER IN PRAYER.**

## the Power of Prayer

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**GOAL:** To plainly show that there are results from praying.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** James 5:16

**God's channel of power flows primarily to people who pray. When we work, we work; but when we pray, God works.**

We need to recognize the power of prayer. When we pray correctly, God does answer prayer. Matter of fact, you can go to a house without being there - through PRAYER.

Some teach that we need to pray to obey; in obedience to God's Word and not for profit. This is not true!

**We pray to obey.  
We pray to profit.**

God has established a **LAW OF PRAYER: I will move when you pray.** (II Chronicles 7:14) Prayer can affect God. It does have an influence. The Lord will not act independent of the prayers of His people (Matthew 7:7-11; James 4:2-3). Prayer is not telling God what He can do. Prayer releases God to do what He wants to do.

⇒ In Mark 10, Jesus knew what Blind Bartemaus wanted, yet He still asked Him. Prayer changes history (Exodus 32:9-14)

**"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."** (Isaiah 55:6)

To be effective in prayer, we must believe that **God is ALL-POWERFUL** and that He can do anything He wants to.

### GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE SHOWN IN MANY WAYS

#### 1. God's power over nature.

- ⇒ Exodus 14; Joshua 3 - Parted the waters.
- ⇒ Mark 4:35-41 - Calmed the storm.
- ⇒ Joshua 10:12-14 - Caused the sun to stand still.
- ⇒ Exodus 17:1-17 - Brought water from a rock.

## 2. Power over circumstances.

⇒ Acts 12 - Peter delivered from jail as a result of prayer.

## 3. Power over lives.

⇒ Exodus 3-4 - God made shy Moses a leader.

⇒ I Kings 19:15 - God kept discouraged Elijah from quitting.

⇒ Acts 9:1-31 - Turned Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. He does not change. (Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6)

**Until you believe that God is able to do anything, you will be a faint-hearted pray-er.**

**“A PRAYER WARRIOR is a person who is convinced that God is omnipotent - that God has the power to do anything, to change anyone and to intervene in any circumstance.”** (Quote: Bill Hybels book, “Too Busy Not To Pray”)

When you truly believe this then you refuse to doubt God.

You can pray about anything (Philippians 4:6); you can pray wherever you are (I Timothy 2:8); and you do not have to be scared or shy (Hebrews 4:16).

<p><b>JESUS' PRAYER PRINCIPLES</b> Matthew 6:5-13</p>
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### 1) PRAY SECRETLY

This is not saying that we are not to pray in church. It is referring to our daily walk with Christ. We do not pray for everyone to see. A private place of prayer helps minimize distractions. When we find a place where we can pray alone, then it is easier to focus on God. When you meet with the Lord regularly at the same place, you will find yourself looking forward to going there to talk with Him.

### 2) PRAY SINCERELY

God does not like babble. Memorizing certain phrases to say when you pray does not please God. He wants us to be real, honest and personal with Him. God wants us to **“Pour out our hearts to him.”** (Psalm 62:8) Talk to Him like you would a friend or father. Say **“Lord, this is how I feel today. I have been thinking about this recently. I am worried about this. I am happy about this.”** Talk to Him sincerely. Casting all your cares upon Him, knowing He cares for you (I Peter 5:7).

### 3) PRAY SPECIFICALLY

**"Our Father..."** Remember, if you are God's child then you are praying to a Father who could not love you more than He already does.

**"...who art in heaven..."** Reminds us of God's power (omnipotence).

**"...Hallowed be thy name..."** Worship and praise Him when you come to God in prayer. Don't list all your needs right away; take some time to hallow His name.

**"...Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."** Give your will to God. Put His will first in your life - in your marriage, family, career, ministry, money, body, relationships, and church.

**"...Give us this day our daily bread..."** Philippians 4:6. Lay out all your concerns, big or small, before God.

**"...Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors..."** Live with a forgiving spirit toward others. Be sure you are not the obstacle!

**"...Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..."** Pray for protection from evil and victory over temptation.

**"...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever..."** End your prayer with more worship. Acknowledge that everything in heaven and earth is God's. Thank the Lord for caring about you, for making it possible for you to talk to Him through prayer.

**"...Amen."** This word means "let it be so".

Remember, make your prayer sincere. It should include worship, submission, requests and confessions. Never forget that **"God's prevailing power is released through prayer."**

**PRAYER MOVES THE HAND THAT MOVES THE WORLD!**

## God Answers Every Prayer

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***“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” (Acts 12:5)***

The situation looked impossible. James had already been killed. Peter was in prison. Sixteen soldiers kept watch over him. Peter’s case looked hopeless. He too would soon be killed. However, the church met the bleak situation by calling a prayer meeting. They knew that prayer was their only hope and that the *“...effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”* (James 5:16).

The church gathered together and began to pray without ceasing. Their prayer was soon to be answered and they didn’t even expect it. As you read through Acts 12, you have to smile when you realize that they didn’t even recognize the answer to their prayers when it came. How many times have we prayed for something and not even believe that God was going to answer our prayers. But, he always answers our prayers. Throughout the Gospels Jesus never mentioned **“unanswered prayer.”** He proclaimed boldly that prayer is always answered.

*“Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7-8)

*“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it!”* (John 14:14)

You receive an answer to prayer each time you **ASK:**

- **A**      **Ask**
- **S**      **Seek**
- **K**      **Knock**

God always gives the correct answer to prayer. He may not answer like you want Him to, but he will always answer in the way that is best for you.

### The Answers God Gives to Prayer

#### No

When what you are praying for is not in the will of God, then God will say **“no”** as an answer to your prayer. There are two other hindrances in prayer, they are **sin** and **unbelief**. Many times **unbelief** will keep people from prayer.



*"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."*  
(James 4:3)

We should not request things as a result of our selfish desires. However if we ask, in the will of God, he promises that He will hear us. His answer to our prayer becomes "yes."

## Yes

*"And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"* (1 John 5:14).

Jesus prayed, *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). Any prayer that is based on the promises of God will be effective and answered.

*"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoke, and shall he not make it good?"* (Numbers 23:19).

*"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us"* (2 Corinthians 1:20).

*"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not"* (Jeremiah 33:3). If we don't call, He will not answer.

*"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (Matthew 21:22).

*"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19).

*"And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able to perform"* (Romans 4:21).

## Wait

Sometimes the timing is not right for the prayer to be answered.

*"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven..."*  
(Ecclesiastes 3:1).

One man has said, **"God's delays are not God's denials."** Delayed answers to prayer are not the same as unanswered prayer. God answers every prayer. Cornelius in Acts 10 prayed until his prayers came up as a memorial before God. God kept putting His prayers in the **"Wait File"** until the timing was right. Up until then His answer had been, **"Wait for the correct time! Be patient!"**

## Stop

*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).*

Some times we pray and God asks us to **"stop"** and make certain things right. God wants our relationship to be right with him before He will answer our other prayers.

*"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).*

God also wants to make sure that our relationship with others is correct before He gives us a "Yes!" answer. *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).*

## **The Rest of the Story**

Peter was fast asleep. He did not wake easily. A light filled the room and he partially woke up when the angel hit him on his side, and lifted him up. The angel had to lead the sleepy man of God each step of the way. They passed the guards on duty, and the iron gate swung open.

Peter decided to go to the house where prayer was being made. The people would be so excited that their prayer had been answered. A young girl named Rhoda answered the Peter's knock at the gate. When she heard his voice she rushed to tell the other prayer warriors that Peter was at the gate. **"You are mad!"** they replied. When she persisted they claimed, **"It is his angel!"** The prayer warriors had resigned themselves to Peter's soon death. She kept interrupting their prayers. Peter kept knocking. The church was so taken up with praying for an answer; that they left their answer knocking at the gate.

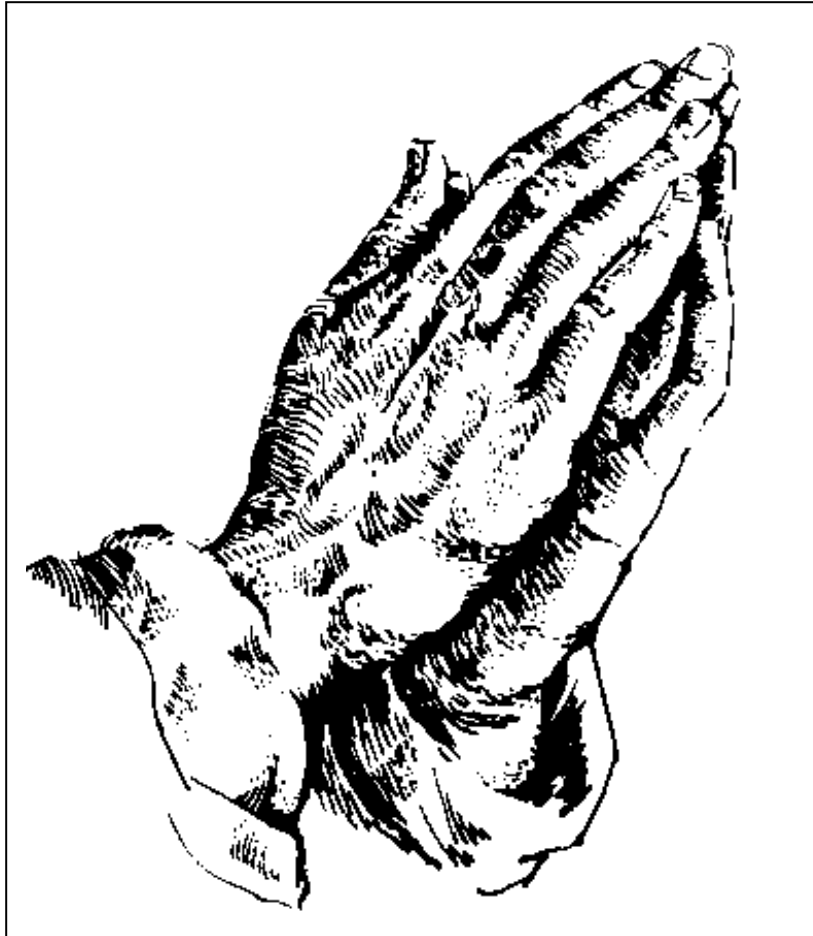
## **A Word from the Wise**

*"The Lord answers all prayer. Knowing so much more than we do, He grants some, refuses others, and delays still others. A delay is an answer! To have what He wants for us without His timing would be disastrous. Often the answer we've been praying for is staring us in the face...There are times when we are so intent on praying that the prayer is all talking and no listening. The answer is knocking!" (Acts Commentary, Lloyd Oglivie)*

**The Answer Is Knocking; God Answers Every Prayer!**

# When You Pray....

## Lessons 6-12



## LESSON SIX:

# Developing a Habit of Prayer

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*"Base your happiness on your hope in Christ. When trials come, endure them patiently; steadfastly maintain the **habit** of prayer" (Romans 12:12).*



**God can communicate with us in many ways, but we can only communicate with Him one way – through PRAYER. That's why it is vital that we establish prayer as a DAILY habit!**

### 1. HAVE A SPECIFIC TIME FOR PRAYER.

Reasons for considering an early morning prayer time:

- The example of many Bible characters (Abraham, Job, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, Hezekiah, David, Daniel, Jesus, etc.)
- It is logical to begin the day with prayer. The best time to tune your instrument is before you play the concert, not after!
- It demonstrates that meeting with God is your first priority. You give Him the first part of your day.
- You are likely to be more rested and your mind is less cluttered first thing in the morning.

### 2. HAVE A SPECIFIC PLACE FOR PRAYER.

*"Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives ... to pray" (Luke 22:39).*

*"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place where he prayed" (Mark 1:35).*

### 3. HAVE A SPECIFIC ROUTINE FOR PRAYER.

A Bible

- use an understandable translation
- use a Bible with readable print
- use a Bible without distracting study notes

A Notebook and Pen

- write down anything the Lord speaks to you about
- keep a personal prayer list
- write down thoughts for further Bible study later on

**Jesus taught us to have the right ATTITUDE in prayer.** (Read Matthew 6:5-8.)

- **BE REAL**

*"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men" (Matthew 6:5).*

- **BE RELAXED**

*"But when you pray go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:6).*

- **BE REVEALING**

*"Don't recite the same prayer over and over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again and again. Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need before you ask Him!" (Matthew 6:7-8).*

**Jesus taught us to have the right APPROACH in prayer** (Matthew 6:9-15).

- *"This, then, is **HOW** you should pray" (Matthew 6:9).*



### **SIX WAYS TO GET A GRASP ON PRAYER**

*"Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up." (Galatians 6:9)*

**RULE #1: Never judge your prayer time by your feelings!**

**RULE #2: If you miss a day, DON'T GIVE UP!**

**1. PRAISE: I express my love to God.**

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)

**TWO KINDS OF PRAISE:**

- ADORATION: praising God for who he is
- THANKSGIVING: praising God for what he has done

*"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him, and bless his name" (Psalm 100:4).*

- A. Remind yourself of the promises found in the various meanings of God name, and affirm them as you pray.
- B. Remind yourself of all the blessings God has given to you, and express your thanks for them as you pray.

<b>THE NAMES OF GOD</b>			
God is so magnificent that the Hebrew language uses compound names to describe the many aspects of His character. You can use each of these compound names to focus on what God is really like. Think on the implications of these names and you'll have lots to praise God for!			
<b>Compound Name</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Scripture</b>	<b>What It Means To Me!</b>
Jehovah Shammah	God is present with me	Ezekiel 48:35	You are with me, so I am never alone!
Jehovah Rohi	God is my shepherd	Psalms 23:1	You lead me, feed me and protect me!
Jehovah Jireh	God is my provider	Genesis 22:14	You see what I need before I even ask!
Jehovah Rapha	God is my healer	Exodus 15:26	You can heal my body, emotions and relationships!
Jehovah Tsidkenu	God is my righteousness	Jeremiah 23:6	You accept me and forgive me of my sins!
Jehovah M'Kaddesh	God is my sanctification	Exodus 31:13	You give me the power to live holy!
Jehovah Shalom	God is my peace	Judges 6:24	You give me peace in spite of life's circumstances!
Jehovah Nissi	God is my banner	Exodus 17:15	You are my victory through conflict and confrontation!
<b>And all God's attributes are summed up in the name of Jesus!</b>			
Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ..." (Phil. 2:9-10)			

**2. PURPOSE: I commit myself to God's will for my life.**

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Pray for God's will to be done ...

- In my family
- In my church
- In my job
- In my ministry
- In my future
- In my neighborhood
- In my city
- In my nation

*"Offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer" (Romans 12:2).*

### **3. PROVISION: I ask God to provide for my needs.**

*"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).*

#### **A. WHAT NEEDS CAN I PRAY ABOUT? ALL OF THEM!**

*"God will supply all your needs from his riches in glory because of what Christ Jesus has done for us" (Philippians 4:19).*

*"You do not have ... because you don't ask God!" (James 4:2).*

#### **B. THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PRAYING: BE SPECIFIC!**

Write down your request, along with a promise you are claiming from the Bible, and expect an answer!

*"Don't worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).*

### **4. PARDON: I ask God to forgive my sins.**

*"And forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12).*

#### **Four Steps to Forgiveness:**

##### **A. Ask God to reveal my sin.**

*"Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me" (Psalms 139:23-24).*

##### **B. Confess each sin specifically.**

*"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you" (Proverbs 28:13).*

##### **C. Make restitution to others when necessary.**

*"When you remember your brother has something against you ... go at once to make peace with him, then come back and offer your gift to God" (Matthew 5:23-24).*

##### **D. By faith, accept God's forgiveness.**

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

5. **PEOPLE: I pray for other people.**

*"...as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).*

Make a list of people you want to pray for. You might pray for different groups of people on different days of the week (missionaries, family, unsaved friends, church leadership, etc.)

*"Pray much for others; plead for God's mercy upon them; give thanks for all he is going to do for them" (1 Timothy 2:1).*

6. **PROTECTION: I ask for spiritual protection.**

*"And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13).*

All believers face spiritual battles. Satan wants to defeat you through temptation and fear, but by praying for protection you will have the power to face every situation.

*"The Spirit who is in you is more powerful than the spirit who is in those who belong to the world" (1 John 4:4).*

7. **PRAISE: I end my prayer the same way I started!**

*"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" (Matthew 6:13).*



## Mechanics of Prayer

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**MEMORY VERSE:** "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psalms 55:17).

### INTRODUCTION

Many times, people hesitate to pray unless they are in a given place, at the right time, with the perfect situation. They feel they must kneel, fold their hands, close their eyes, and speak aloud for the Lord to hear their prayers. But this is a mistake! God is more interested in our heart - motive - as always!

*"... for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7b).*

*"Most men pray for power, the strength to do things. Few people pray for love, the quality to be someone." (Robert D. Foster)*

### I. What Counts with God

So, how does it all fit together (that is what mechanics are!) in this prayer business? During His most often quoted sermon (The Sermon on the Mount) Jesus took time to teach His followers how they should actually go about the process of praying.

#### A. The ATTITUDE of Prayer (Matthew 6:5-8)

- 1) not to be seen of men (in secret)
- 2) not to boast of our closeness to God (we have already gained our reward by the acclaim of men)
- 3) but to be heard by God without much repetition and long speaking (Jesus states that the heathen believe that the more they speak, the more chance they will have of being heard!)
- 4) Jesus reminds us that God knows what we need even before we ask - He just wants us to communicate with Him - but that includes listening to His voice, and not just hearing our own!

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"Prayer is not a substitute for working, thinking, watching, suffering, or giving; prayer is a support for all other efforts." **(George Buttrick)**

## B. The EXAMPLE of Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

The disciples knew that the followers of John the Baptist said many prayers, fasted often, and were devoted to John. They came to Jesus asking Him to teach them how to pray, and so we have the most famous prayer in the Bible. It is called the "Lord's Prayer", and has been misused by many. Jesus did not mean for His disciples to just memorize and repeat after Him this same prayer every time they prayed. He was giving them a formula (pattern) to follow about things which should be important and included in all their prayers.

The Lord's Prayer contains three petitions concerned with the holiness and will of God, and three concerned with our personal needs.

Let us look at this model prayer in different segments:

- 1) "Our Father which art in heaven" - This acknowledges God as superior to all things and each of us.
- 2) "Hallowed be thy name" - We give worship to Him for blessings - magnify His Holy name.
- 3) "Thy kingdom come" - Consecration to Him, and surrender to God's will in our daily lives.
- 4) "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" - submit to His will, let God lead and direct our lives, plans, actions, and thoughts. In heaven, nobody argues with God's design and plan. We shouldn't here on earth either!
- 5) "Give us this day our daily bread" - We petition God for our needs. But notice that it is not for all of our needs for the rest of our lives, but for our needs TODAY!
- 6) "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" -We petition God for mercy, but notice that God's forgiveness is connected with our own forgiveness of those who wrong us.
- 7) "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" - We petition God for protection from the devil and all forces of evil.
- 8) "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" - We praise the LORD for He alone is worthy!
- 9) "Amen" - We close our prayer with confidence that we have prayed according to His will and plan for us.

"Lord, make me more like Yourself, less like myself." (Lester Case)

## C. The TIME of Prayer

Every believer should pray - when you pray is up to you. However, the Bible does tell us on several different occasions, that we should pray always, without ceasing, constantly. So, no matter what time of day it is - IT IS TIME TO PRAY!

- 1) Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:18 - **always**
- 2) I Thessalonians 5:17 - **without ceasing**
- 3) Luke 11:5-10 - **with importunity (persistence)**
- 4) Romans 12:12 - **continuing instant**
- 5) Colossians 4:2 - **continually**

## II. What Can HINDER my Prayers?

Is it possible that I can pray and it won't do me any good? Is there anything that can keep my prayers from reaching heaven and the ears of God? Oh YES! There are a number of things that can be a roadblock to my prayers. But I need to know what they are in order to avoid them.

In his lesson entitled "Eleven Hindrances to Prayer", Rev. Jim Poitras gives us the following list. Let us be careful to avoid every point on it!

- A. Unconfessed sin - Psalms 66:18
- B. Insincerity - Matthew 6:5
- C. Carnal Motives - James 4:3
- D. Unbelief - James 1:5-6
- E. Satanic Activity - Daniel 10:10-13
- F. Domestic Problems - I Peter 3:7
- G. Pride - Luke 8:10-14
- H. Robbing God - Malachi 3:8-10
- I. Refusing to Submit to Biblical Teaching-Proverbs 1:24-28; 28:9; Zechariah 7:11-14
- J. Refusing to forgive or be forgiven - Matthew 5:23-24; 6:12-14
- K. Refusing to help the needy - Proverbs 21:3; I John 3:16-17

As with every other type of mechanics, the "mechanics" of prayer are simply the tools that make it work - Let's use them!

*"Let's not just study about it, read up on it, or discuss it: LET US PRAY!" (Linda Poitras)*

## LESSON EIGHT:

# Effective Prayer

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**MEMORY VERSE:** *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (James 5:16)

## INTRODUCTION

Notice that our memory verse talks about what happens when a “righteous” man prays! It is amazing how often the Word of God speaks of special things happening to the “righteous”. There is something about walking down the “Path of Righteousness” that makes many of life’s troubles easier to bear.

James specifically speaks about the kind of prayer this “righteous” man prays - “effectual” and “fervent”. We know that “fervent” means to be very eager, excited, or emotionally involved in something. And “effectual” means that it works! It gets the desired results!

So, James was telling us that the “righteous man” (the one who does things according to God’s laws, in a correct way) can pray in a very excited, emotional, involved way for something, and his prayers will work! What an exciting promise! But what is this “prayer” business?

## WHAT IS PRAYER?

According to Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, prayer is “a humble communication in thought or speech to God or to an object of worship expressing supplication, thanksgiving, praise, confession, etc.; an entreaty made to someone.”

In “The Accelerated Bible Curriculum - Lesson 8”, a story is told of a tourist to China who visited a heathen temple on a great feast day and observed hundreds of worshippers surrounding the hideous idol encased there. Most of the worshippers brought prayers written on small pieces of paper and wrapped in balls of stiff mud to fling at the idol.

He inquired of the purpose for the strange and appalling practice, and learned, if the mud ball stuck to the idol, the prayer would surely be answered. But if the mud fell off, their god had rejected the prayer.

This story may cause us to feel sad at the ignorance of praying to an idol, but many times, we who serve a LIVING God don’t really know how to pray or how to get answers.

Many people pray, believing that this is a “magic” formula that will get them whatever they are praying for. Prayer is NOT magic - but law! It works, regardless of whether man recognizes it or not.

Prayer is a need, finding a voice. When hungry hearts cry out to God, he always meets them at their point of need (Luke 11:9).

Prayer is essential in a Christian’s life. It does many things for us and to us - things which we will list here to help us understand what it really is:

1. Prayer draws God’s attention close to us and draws us near to Him (II Chronicles 7:14-15; Psalms 25:1).
2. Prayer gives us strength to bear our daily burdens (Psalms 18; Psalms 86:6-7).
3. Prayer is the link that connects God’s fulfillment of His promises to our daily lives (Luke 11:5-13; Matthew 9:38).
4. Prayer is the only means through which we can be filled with His Spirit (Acts 1:12-14; John 14:12-26). Even Peter and the rest of the apostles, and even Jesus’ own mother were together in prayer for the promise of the Holy Ghost. And it came! Jesus always keeps His promises, but He always expects us to fulfill our part too. Did the Holy Ghost fall on people who were not in the Upper Room obeying the command of Jesus to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with power from on high? (Acts 1:4) NO! The apostles had to obey God’s Word – and THEN He kept His promise!
5. After we have been obedient to His commandment to receive His Spirit, then he again commands us to continue to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. It is only through prayer that we can accomplish this (John 4:24).

Prayer is more than important - for without it, we would be without a means to communicate to God, or a way to come before His throne. We have the great privilege of becoming acquainted with our God through prayer - just as we become acquainted with our earthly father through daily association and communication.

We learn much about the Lord by reading His Word (the Bible) but we begin to know and enjoy Him when we pray! Prayer is simply TALKING TO GOD.

## **HOW DO WE PRAY?**

There are many examples of prayer in the Bible - both in the Old and New Testaments. Jesus himself prayed and gave us examples, but there is one thing common with all of His prayers. Jesus was always careful to “give thanks”. The Psalmist David knew about this secret, long before Jesus ever came to the earth, and he used this key to unlock heaven’s door many different times. (Psalms 100:4; 116:17)

## **I. Start with THANKSGIVING!**

Everyone is thankful AFTER a prayer has been answered. But it takes divine faith to thank the Lord and Praise Him BEFORE the need has been met, or before the circumstances change and get better.

- A. Don't mention mistakes and failures now—let God know that you understand he is not the author of confusion, sickness, trouble or heartache? He is the Almighty, All-Loving, All-Powerful Creator of everything good and pure and loving and holy! Hallelujah!
- B. God desires our praise and His Word says he “inhabits the praises of His people- Israel” (Psalms 22:3).
- C. The writer of Hebrews goes a bit further in his 13th chapter and verse 15 when he says: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” Let us begin our prayer with PRAISE!

## **II. Continue with CONFESSION!**

It is not easy to confess a wrong that we have done, or something that we have left undone, but until we do, it feels like a giant weight is keeping us from the presence of God.

- A. Be specific—tell God exactly what you have done that was not pleasing to Him.
- B. God is looking for a “broken and a contrite heart” (Psalms 51 - especially verses 10-12). We must be honest and sincere with our confession, and God looks at our heart.
- C. Confession bridges the awful gulf between a righteous God and an unrighteous man. If you fall into sin, be sure to confess and ask for forgiveness (I John 2:1). God's forgiveness will remove every weight and usher you right into the presence of the King! (Hebrews 12:1).

“It is strange that in our praying we seldom ask for a change of character, but always a change in circumstances.” (Bits and Pieces)

## **III. Send God your SUPPLICATION!**

The Apostle Paul talks of this portion of prayer in Philippians 4:6—“*...in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*” This expresses concern for our own welfare. We tell God about these needs because we cannot supply them from our own resources.

- A. Supplication goes beyond communication.
  - 1) God's presence is very real, and your needs are specific. The Holy Ghost many times will direct your thoughts to a particular need, and then you should voice them to God.

- 2) State the exact problem and the circumstances causing you difficulty.
- 3) Let God know that you are totally helpless unless He intervenes.
- 4) Make sure you voice your complete trust in God's power.
- 5) Let Him know that you believe Him to perform His perfect will in the entire situation - He has it all in His hands! When you expect Him to answer - HE WILL!

B. Another form of supplication is when we talk to God for someone else's need. This is called INTERCESSION. There are many examples of this type of prayer in God's Word:

- 1) Abraham prayed for Lot and his family (Genesis 18:23-32)
- 2) Moses prayed for the children of Israel many times (Exodus 32:31-32). He was so serious and concerned, that his own life became of little value beside the need of the nation he was leading.
  - a. It is at this point that INTERCESSION becomes different from SUPPLICATION.
  - b. Now we are desperate for God to answer for the other person, never mind ourselves!

C. There is another type of intercession that is very special - prayer for our enemies! This one is most difficult, but more powerful than any other!

- 1) This type of praying is a direct commandment of Jesus in His "*Sermon on the Mount*". "*Love your enemies ...and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44).
- 2) Jesus not only commanded it - he practiced it! His final prayer from the cross released the power that resulted in the thief's repentance and salvation (Luke 23:34).

D. It is not easy to forgive an enemy or pray for him as a friend.

- 1) When we find ourselves in this type of predicament, we turn to God again - first for ourselves. We ask the Lord to give us the grace and strength to forgive this person and love them. If we keep our bad feelings, we are harming ourselves seriously!
- 2) Before we can expect good results from our prayers, we must first forgive someone who has wronged or hurt us.
- 3) Then we must seek that person and make peace - otherwise, we cannot lift clean hands before the Lord and expect Him to answer our requests. "*Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*" (Matthew 5:23-24).

**"One way to have fewer conflicts with our fellowman is to wrestle with God in prayer."**  
(Quotable Quotations)

#### IV. Take Time to BE QUIET!

To be considered “communion” there must be a two-way conversation. This is a part of prayer that many times is sadly neglected. David knew about this (Psalms 85:8) and we need to practice it.

- A. When we stop our talking and listen with an open heart and a mind fixed on Jesus, He can speak to our hearts - usually through a scripture passage or a thought from Him.
- B. Very close friends don't need to talk all the time—they enjoy just being together. The same is true with Jesus and me - He needs to be my closest friend! I need to talk to Him often, I need to listen often, and sometimes, we just need to be together!

*“It is good to pray for the repair of mistakes, but praying earlier would keep us from making so many. . . .When puzzled, go to prayer and LISTEN.”*  
(J. C. Macaulay)

#### V. Some Requirements of EFFECTIVE PRAYER

Several conditions must be met for our prayers to be the best they can possibly be. According to The NEW LIFE STUDY BIBLE article entitled “Effective Prayer” these include:

- A. Our prayers will not be answered unless we have a sincere, true faith (Mark 11:24).
  - 1) Jesus reminded the father of the demoniac of this (Mark 9:23)
  - 2) The author of Hebrews reminds us of this (Hebrews 10:22).
  - 3) James encourages us to ask of God *“in faith, nothing wavering”* (James 1:6).
- B. Prayer must also be made in Jesus' Name. Jesus Himself expressed this principle when He said, *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it”* (John 14:13-14). Our prayers should be made in harmony with the person, the character, and the will of Jesus Christ. God will honor any prayer that he would have prayed Himself. There is no limit to the power of prayer when addressed to God in faith according to His desire.
- C. No prayer is effective until it is made according to the perfect will of God. I John 5:14-15 says: *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”*
  - 1) In many instances we know God's will because He has revealed it to us in His Word. We can be sure that any prayer that is truly based upon the promises of God in His Word will indeed be effective (I Kings 18:1; I Kings 18:21-24).



- 2) At other times, God's will becomes clear only as we earnestly seek to determine what it is. Then once we know His will about any given issue, we can pray with confidence and faith that God will answer.
- D. Not only must we pray according to God's will, but we must be in God's will if we expect Him to hear and answer us.
- 1) God will give us the things we ask for only if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).
  - 2) The apostle John states: *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight"* (I John 3:22). Obeying God's commandments, loving Him, and pleasing Him are indispensable conditions for receiving answers to prayer.
  - 3) When James wrote that the prayers of the righteous are effectual (see Memory Verse above), he meant both a person who has been made righteous by faith in Christ, and one who is living a righteous, God-fearing, and obedient life (James 5:16-18; Psalms 34:13-14).
  - 4) The Psalmist David lets us know what will happen if we cherish sin in our lives, "the Lord will not hear" our prayers (Psalms 66:18; James 4:3). But God also promises to listen and forgive our sins, and heal our land when we obey His laws (II Chronicles 7:14; Luke 18:14).
- E. Finally, for our prayers to be effective, they must be persistent.
- 1) The persistent widow (Luke 18:1-7)
  - 2) Jesus' instructions to "ask...seek...knock" (Matthew 7:7-8)
  - 3) The apostle Paul admonishes us to be steadfast in prayer (Colossians 4:2)
  - 4) Old Testament saints recognized this principle (Moses – Exodus 17:11 and Elijah – I Kings 17 & 18)

## COULD YOU NOT TARRY ONE HOUR? PRAYER GUIDE

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(Source: Unknown)

### 1. OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Benefit	Name	Meaning
SIN	JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU	"Jehovah our righteousness"
	JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH	"Jehovah who sanctifies"
SPIRIT	JEHOVAH-SHALOM	"Jehovah is peace"
	JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH	"Jehovah is there"
SOUNDNESS	JEHOVAH-ROPHE	"Jehovah heals"
SUCCESS	JEHOVAH-JIREH	"Jehovah's provision shall be seen"
SECURITY	JEHOVAH-NISSI	"Jehovah my banner"
	JEHOVAH-ROHI	"Jehovah my shepherd"

- A. Picture Calvary and thank God you can call Him "FATHER" by virtue of the blood of Jesus.
- B. Hallow the names of God corresponding with the Five benefits in the New Covenant, and make your faith declarations.

### 2. THY KINGDOM COME. THY WILL BE DONE

- A. Yourself
- B. Your family (mate, children, other family members)
- C. Your Church (Pastor, leadership, faithfulness of people, harvest)
- D. Nation (City, State, and National political and Spiritual Leaders)

### 3. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

- A. Be in the will of God (prayer life, church, work habits, obedience in giving)
- B. Believe it is God's will to prosper you
- C. Be specific
- D. Be tenacious (hold fast; firm grip)

### 4. AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

- A. Ask God to forgive you
- B. Forgive and release others
- C. Set your will to forgive those who sin against you

5. **AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

- A. Put on the whole armour of God (Put on the Lord Jesus Christ)
  - 1. Loins girt about with TRUTH
  - 2. Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS
  - 3. Feet shod with the PREPARATION (READINESS) of the gospel of PEACE
  - 4. Shield of FAITH
  - 5. Helmet of SALVATION
  - 6. Sword of the Spirit which is the WORD OF GOD
- B. Pray a hedge of protection (you are my Refuge, my Fortress, my God)
  - 1. Because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation
  - 2. Because he hath set his love upon Me
  - 3. Because he hath made known My name

6. **FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOREVER**

- A. Make your faith declarations
- B. Return to praise

# Prayer Wheel

1. **PRAISE:** Psalm 22:3; 63:3 Hebrews 13:15—  
Begin all prayer with praise. Praise esteems God for greatness and virtue.
2. **FORGIVENESS:** Matthew 6:14-15—Nothing blocks your spiritual progress more fatally than an unforgiving spirit. Forgiveness is a complete pouring out of any feeling that might develop against anyone during the day.
3. **CONFESSION:** Psalm 139:23-24; Psalm 66:18—If you hide sin in your heart God will not hear you. Rid yourself of sin and you will clear the road for **POWER PRAYER**.



4. **PETITION:** James 4:2-3; Matthew 6:9-13—  
This aspect of prayer deals with our personal needs.
5. **INTERCESSION:** I Timothy 2:1-2; Matthew 9:37-38—Intercession is prayer for others.
6. **READ THE BIBLE:** II Timothy 3:16—Read the Bible during prayer. The Word is enlightening to the eyes (Psalm 19:9)
7. **MEDITATION:** Psalm 1:1-2; Psalm 77:12—Take time to “think on these things.” God will open your understanding.
8. **THANKSGIVING:** Philippians 4:6—Spend special time thanking God aloud for His provision and goodness to you.
9. **PRAY THE WORD:** Personally apply, out loud, the precepts of the Bible.
10. **SINGING:** Psalm 100:2; Ephesians 5:19—Singing refreshes the soul. Try singing in the Spirit.
11. **LISTENING:** I Kings 19:11-12—Prayer is not all talking to God. Prayer is also listening.
12. **PRAISE:** Matthew 6:13—Conclude every prayer with praise.

taken from *...first of all...Prayer*  
by Teri Spears and Thetus Tenney

## A Prayer Pattern

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**GOAL:** To give us a pattern of prayer in an attempt to help cultivate an effective and consistent prayer life.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 6:5-13

### ACTS – method

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(Taken from Bill Hybels book *“Too Busy Not to Pray.”*)

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#### **A**doration:

Four reasons to begin prayer with adoration:

1. It sets the tone for the entire prayer and causes us to focus our attention on God.
2. It reminds us of God’s identity and inclination. Praise God for who He is, lifting up His character and personality gives us a greater understanding of who God is.
3. It purifies the one who is praying.
4. And, God is worthy of adoration (I John 3:1).

A God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent and yet He loves us, watches over us and gives us good gifts. This is something to get excited about. Our heavenly father is worthy of our worship, and so right at the beginning let us offer it to Him.

How to adore God:

- List His attributes.
- Use psalms of praise such as Psalms 8, 19, 23, 46, 95, 100 and 148.
- Sing to God.

#### **C**onfession:

We often like to leave this out or we lump our sins together in a pile; not making them appear as bad. When you pray, confess your sins individually and be specific.

When you have the courage to call your sins by their true names many things happen:

- A. Your conscience will be cleansed.
- B. You will begin to learn the meaning of peace as you are flooded with relief that God has a forgiving nature.
- C. Then you will feel free to pray.

## **T**hanksgiving:

- Psalm 103:2; I Thessalonians 5:18

There is a difference between feeling grateful and expressing thanks (for example, the story of the Ten Lepers found in Luke 17:11-19). All ten were healed and had tremendous gratitude for what Jesus had done. But only one came back to thank Jesus. Jesus felt disappointed by the ones who felt gratitude but did not take the time to express it.

Thank God every day for four kinds of blessings:

1. answered prayers
2. spiritual
3. relational
4. material

## **S**upplications: (requests)

- Philippians 4:6; James 4:2

If you have adored Him, confessed your sins and thanked Him for all His good gifts, you are ready to tell Him what you need. Break down your requests into groups that suit you, such as family, God's will, personal, etc.

## Prayer Pointers

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“...Behold, he prayeth.”

(Acts 9:11)

Saul, just knocked down on the road to Damascus, physically blinded but spiritually alert did not have to take a course in New Testament praying before he could pray. He is found immediately on Strait Street with his life straightened out and praying. As you read the Epistles you see that Paul became a great prayer warrior.

In this lesson we want to look at some “**Prayer Pointers**” that will help strengthen our prayer lives and will help us become effective prayer warriors affecting the world.

### *Prayer Positions*

<b>Sitting</b>	Acts 2:2; Luke 0:13
<b>Kneeling</b>	Acts 9:40; Ezra 9:5; Daniel 6:10; Acts 20:36; Acts 21:5
<b>Bowing</b>	Psalm 95:6; Exodus 34:8
<b>Prostrate</b>	2 Samuel 12:16; Matthew 26:39
<b>Standing</b>	Mark 11:24
<b>Walking</b>	Genesis 13:17
<b>Lying on Bed</b>	Psalm 63:6

### *When To Pray*

<b>Early Morning</b>	Psalm 63:1; Mark 1:35
<b>Morning</b>	Acts 10:9; Psalm 5:3; Psalm 88:13
<b>Noon</b>	Acts 10:30
<b>Evening</b>	Psalm 55:17; Matthew 26:38-41; Matthew 14:23
<b>Midnight</b>	Acts 16:25
<b>Day and Night</b>	1 Timothy 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:3
<b>All Night</b>	Luke 6:12
<b>Multiple Times</b>	Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10
<b>Unceasingly</b>	1 Thessalonians 5:17
<b>Always</b>	Luke 18:1

## Into the Day

I got up early one morning  
And rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
I didn't have time to pray.

Troubles just tumbled about me  
And heavier came each task.  
Why doesn't God help me, I wondered,  
He answered "You didn't ask."

I tried to come into God's presence.  
I used all my keys at the lock.  
God gently and lovingly chided,  
'Why child, you didn't knock.'

I wanted to see joy and beauty.  
But the day toiled on grey and bleak.  
I called on the Lord for the reason-  
He said, "You didn't seek."

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

(Author Unknown)

**"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud:  
and he shall hear my voice."**

(Psalm 55:17)

As you develop your prayer life and personal prayer ministry, you should look for prayer opportunities. When someone mentions a need to you and asks you to pray why not respond, "Yes I will pray about that. In fact, why don't we pray about it right now." Thetus Tenney says, "an immediate prayer at the time of a confessed need can be very effective." Jesus prayed this way. He met people with needs; asked them "What do you need?" He then prayed for them and they had their healing or miracle immediately.

### *Where to Pray*

<b>In the Church</b>	Mark 11:17; Acts 22:17
<b>In the House</b>	Daniel 6:10; Acts 9:40; Acts 10:30
<b>In the Street</b>	Acts 16:18
<b>Going to Church</b>	Acts 3:1
<b>Prayer Closet</b>	Matthew 6:6
<b>Housetop</b>	Acts 10:9



<b>Wilderness/Forest</b>	Luke 5:16
<b>Garden</b>	Matthew 26:38-41
<b>Solitary Place</b>	Mark 1:35; Luke 9:18
<b>Mountain</b>	Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; 9:28
<b>In Jail</b>	Acts 16:25
<b>Riverside</b>	Acts 16:13
<b>Anywhere/Everywhere</b>	1 Timothy 2:8; Ephesians 6:18

### *How To Pray*

“Here’s what I want you to do. Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace. The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply.”

(Reading taken from : *The Message*, Matthew 6)

### *Levels of Prayer*

<b>Ask</b>	: <b>Petition/Requests</b>
<b>Results</b>	<b>“you shall receive”</b>
<b>Seek</b>	: <b>Devotion</b>
<b>Results</b>	<b>“you shall find”</b>
<b>Knock</b>	: <b>Intercession</b>
<b>Results</b>	<b>“door will be opened”</b>

David Bryant, founder and president of **Concerts of Prayer International** suggests six portions of prayer

### *Prayer Portions*

<b>Rejoice</b>	Worship and Praise
<b>Repent</b>	Confession of Sin
<b>Resist</b>	Battle Satan and forces
<b>Request</b>	Ask and Intercession
<b>Recommit</b>	Yield ourselves to God
<b>Receive</b>	Listen for God to speak

Jesus asked a penetrating question after teaching on the subject of prayer. He inquired, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) He was asking, "When I return, will there be faith or won't there? Will people still be praying and trusting God in faith? What type of world will I find; a world filled with sin or a world filled with the power of God? What is going to be happening in your country?" Jesus' question comes immediately after his parable on prayer that began with "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18:1) Lots of us make commitments to pray and it lasts for some time and then we give up. If we would persist in prayer we could make a difference in our lives and the world that we live in. The church will not have growth and revival without a large and consistent prayer ministry base.

What was the cause of David winning the battle? One phrase keeps recurring in David's life; **"and David inquired of the Lord."** What was the cause of Joshua being deceived by the Gibeonites that came to him dressed like they had come on a long journey? His failure was because he **"asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord."** (Joshua 9:14) How will you be successful in the battle?

**"Watch and Pray."**  
(Matthew 26:40)

## Secret to Prayer—“Just do it!”

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“Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer....”  
(Acts 3:1)

“And it came to pass as we went to prayer.”  
(Acts 16:16)

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together....”  
(Acts 4:31)

Browsing through the twenty-eight chapters of the Book of Acts we quickly see the importance the early church placed on prayer. (Acts 1:14,24; 2:42; 3:6; 4:24-31; 6:4,6; 9:40; 10:2,4,9,31; 11:5; 12:5; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 22:17; 28:8) Prayer provided the basis for the spreading of the Gospel to the known world. The church began with prayer when about one hundred and twenty gathered together in the Upper Room to await, in prayer, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. This resulted in a ten-day prayer meeting yielding results that are still being seen two thousand years later. Thus, prayer served as the launching pad for the birth and growth of the church.

Prayer was a way of life for them and it was a priority in their Christian walk. Surprisingly there is very little teaching on the “**how to**” of prayer in the Book of Acts; however, there are a whole lot of examples. Many books have been written on Prayer and I have read some of them. I have reached the conclusion that the best way to learn how to pray is to pray. Like the slogan says, “**Just do it!**” When Jesus walked on this earth, he really spent a large portion of his ministry in prayer; sometimes whole nights. He also taught others how to pray; not by running seminars and special conferences but by being caught in the act of prayer. He took his disciples through the “**School of Prayer**” by giving them on-the-job training. He showed them by example and they then tried it on their own. We must all develop a prayer life; a lifestyle of prayer.

**Prayer isn't a method. It's a way of life.**

A pastor traveled by ship to visit a church across the ocean. While on the way the ship stopped at an island. There the pastor met three fishermen. When they found out that he was a pastor they excitedly said, “We be Christians too!”

The pastor asked them if they knew the "Lord's Prayer." To his surprise he learned that the fishermen had never heard of it.

"What do you say when you pray?" inquired the pastor.

"We pray, We be men, you be God, have mercy on us!"

The pastor was appalled at the primitive nature of their prayer and spent the day teaching them the "Lord's Prayer." The fishermen were willing students and could recite the prayer with no mistakes. The pastor was so proud of his achievement.

On the return trip the ship stopped at the same island again. As the ship drew closer to the shore he could see the three fishermen rushing toward the ship. They cried, "Pastor, we come hurry to meet you!"

"What is it that you need?" asked the pastor.

"We be so sorry. We forget your fine, fine prayer. We say, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name... and then we forget the rest of the words. Please tell us the prayer again."

The pastor replied, "Just go back and pray, We be men, you be God, have mercy on us!"

Martin Luther, when he was a monk, had so many positions that he became too busy to pray. He was supposed to quote from his prayer books every day. He would "stack up" his prayers for weeks and then he would take some days and get "prayed up." In 1520 he ended up sick in bed for five days. He got further behind with quoting from his prayer book and soon he was three months behind with his prayers. Then, he simply gave up!

Prayer is not a matter of quoting prayers from a book. It is not mere repetition of words that we recite three times a day. Some tend to force prayer into a place that it was never supposed to be. Prayer should never be a struggle. Prayer is not a chore; something that is endured. We have made prayer difficult and painful. It is not a ritual but time we spend with a friend who hears, and answers our needs.

**"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."**

**(Hebrews 4:16)**

When Jesus walked on the earth prayer had become a formality rather than free expression. There were written prayers for all occasions. Prayer had become a ritual rather than something that was spontaneous from the heart. There were set prayer times much like the Muslims have today as they bow towards Mecca at specified times. Prayers had become very long, filled with big words. It was believed that whoever was longer in prayer was heard more quickly. The louder and wordier the prayer, the better. They used repetitious words and phrases (Matthew 6:5-8). These tendencies should not creep into our churches. Prayer can become a matter of pride rather than an expression of our heart and our being in need. Listen to the brand new

Christians pray. They have not been taught **“how to”** yet. They talk to God as their friend.

A famous preacher once said, **“It is not that prayer has been tried and found wanting. It is rather that it has not really been tried.”** It is unfortunate and incorrect for us to look to God as a last resort. We go to him because we have nowhere else to go. **“Then we learn that the storms of life have driven us, not upon the rocks, but into the desired haven.”**

Mark Foster said in his selected sermon outline, **“When God Builds You a Prayer Room”** that we should **“never make God a last resort. If you don’t pray now, while you have the chance, He may put you in a place where you will have to pray.”**

**The first and only thing that will work is the last thing that we will try...**

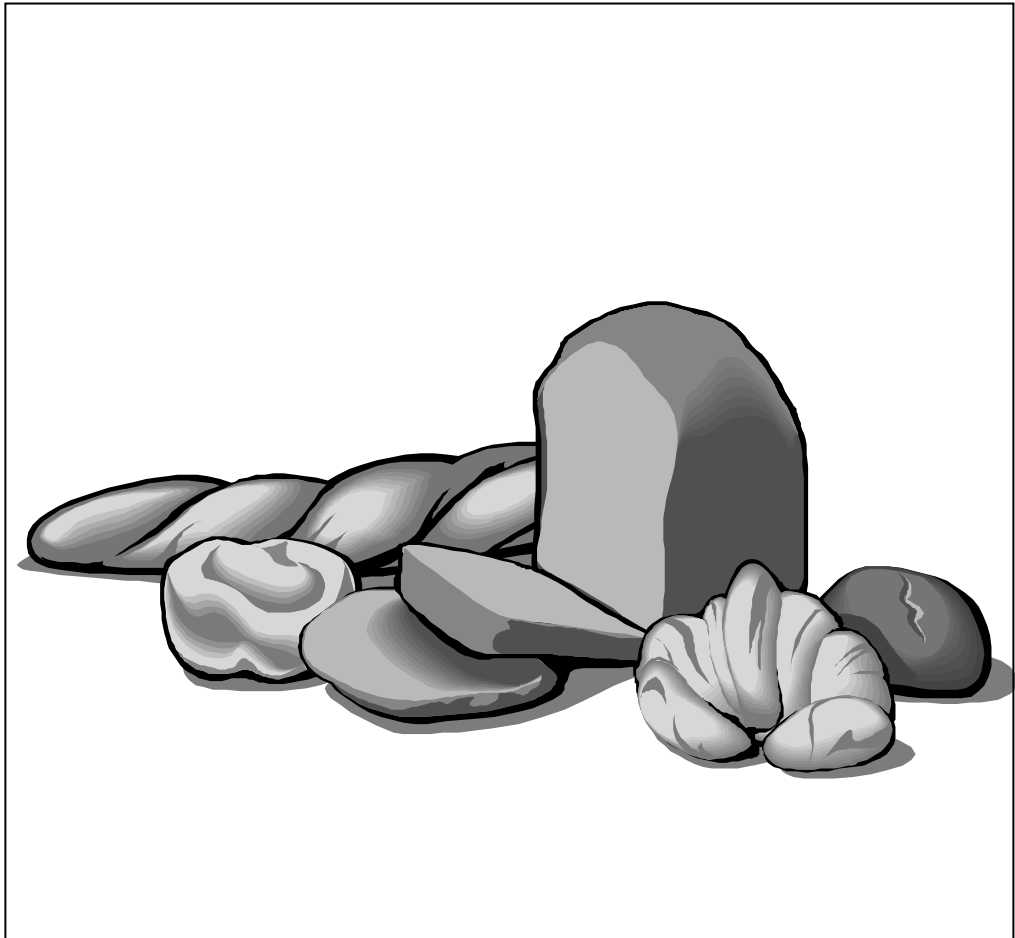
## **PRAYER**

Abraham Lincoln once said, “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.”

Why should we only go to God in times of emergency, when we don’t have anyone else to turn to. It is common for people to pray in times of emergency. At these times prayer is never far from our lips. Mother Teresa had a better idea when she said, “Prayer is the mortar that holds our house together.” Why wait until our house is falling apart before we pray. If you want to know how to pray: Just do it!

# When You Fast....

## Lessons 13-17



## Fasting Facts

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*“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”*

(Acts 14:23)

*“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”*

(Acts 13:13)

Prayer and Fasting fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. They are marriage partners in the spirit. They walk together, hand in hand. Fasting without praying, results in nothing more than going hungry.

Fasting is a vital spiritual discipline for all believers. It is as relevant today as it has ever been. Jesus did not say, “If you fast” He said “*When you fast...*” (Matthew 6:16). The Apostle Paul fasted often because he said concerning his life, “*in fastings often*” (2 Corinthians 11:27). He also stated, “*But I keep my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

For our purpose “**Fasting**” is a total abstinence of food for a definite period of time. When Jesus entered into the wilderness to be tempted he fasted forty days. How do we know he fasted? Luke 4:2 reveals that “*he did eat nothing.*”

“**Fasting**” has also been referred to as a time to “*afflict our souls*” (Leviticus 16:31); “*humbled my soul*” (Psalms 35:13). It is a way of humbling ourselves before God (Isaiah 58:5; Psalms 69:10). It will bring understanding to our spiritual condition and helps to regain spiritual determination. Fasting invites God into our problems and situations and asks Him for an answer. Fasting tells God that we are turning to Him for the answer to our need.

*“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”*

(Joel 2:12)

In the beginning of Luke 4 Jesus approached the wilderness experience “full of the Holy Ghost.” After his forty days of prayer, fasting and overcoming the temptations from the devil he came forth “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). Prayer and fasting made a “powerful” difference. Fasting will put the power of God at work and

will aggravate the devil. Charles Stanley once said, "God will not entrust supernatural power to those whose lives are not under his control." In fasting we enter into a war with our flesh and bring it into subjection to the Spirit.

*"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."*

(Galatians 5:16-17)

It is our way of telling God how hungry we are for the things of the Spirit rather than just the things of the flesh.

*"...I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."*

(Job 23:12)

*"...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

(Matthew 4:4)

## Fasting in the Book of Acts

In the Book of Acts "**fasting**" played an important role in the growth of the early church. Additionally it was a practice of the early Christians.

- ⇒ After Saul's powerful, knock down conversion on the Road to Damascus he fasts and prays for three days (Acts 9:9).
- ⇒ Cornelius fasted as he sought out God's plan for salvation (Acts 10:30).
- ⇒ In Acts 27:33-34 Paul fasted for a long time and the crew had fasted for fourteen days on a sinking ship.
- ⇒ In Acts 13:1-3 they fasted and the Holy Ghost said, "*Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*" (verse 2). They fasted and prayed, laid their hands on them and sent them off to do the Lord's work.
- ⇒ In Acts 14:23 the elders (pastors) were ordained in an atmosphere of prayer and fasting.
- ⇒ In Acts 23:12-13, more than forty Jews came together and had a mind to fast until Paul had been killed. This goes to show us that if we fast and our heart is not right; our motives not pure and correct then God will not answer. If we are praying and fasting for the wrong thing no amount of prayer and fasting will make it correct.



David fasted for seven days in 1 Samuel 12. He was attempting to barter and beg with God to change his judgment. Just because we fast does not mean that God will answer our prayers in the way we want Him to.

In studying for this lesson I read a valuable book entitled, Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough by Elmer L. Towns. This was an excellent resource and provides much of the insight for this lesson. In this book Elmer Towns suggests that if there is a place where God has met with you in the past, that would be a good place for you to go to pray and fast.

He gives three measured steps to fasting.

1. Vow to God that you will fast..
2. Prepare for the fast.
3. Fulfill your resolution.

Mr. Towns claims, and I agree that once you have made the vow to fast, and then begin that Satan will try to:

1. Make you too hungry.
2. Put other thoughts in your mind.
3. Tempt you to quit.
4. Interrupt your schedule.
5. Discourage you.
6. Attack your fast.

I can most certainly relate to what Mr. Towns is saying. It seems that fast days are my hungriest days. Normally I can wake up in the morning and not be hungry. However, on the days that I have decided to fast I wake up so hungry. Not to mention, that fast days seem to be my most carnal days. This is because of the war between the flesh and the Spirit.

Satan will not be happy for you to fast and destroy all of his plans. In fasting we proclaim like Jesus said in the Lord's prayer, "*deliver us from evil*" (Matthew 6:13). Fasting is a time for the Lord to deliver us from the evil one.

### **"When You Fast"** (Matthew 6:16)

1. When you need divine intervention (Jonah 3: 5-9; Esther 4:16)
2. When you need revival (Joel 1:14-15; 2:28)
3. When you have desperate needs (1 Samuel 1:7-8)

4. For better health (Isaiah 58:6-8)
5. When you want to be used in demon deliverance (Mark 9:29; Matthew 17:21)
6. To loose from besetting sins (Hebrews 12:1)
7. When you have a problem or need protection (Ezra 8:21-23)
8. Before any major changes (Acts 13:2)
9. When habits need to be broken (Isaiah 58:6)
10. To mortify lusts (1 Corinthians 9:27)
11. To strengthen our prayers (Acts 10:30)
12. To express repentance (Jonah 3:5-10)
13. When you need to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Daniel 9:3)
14. To prepare for spiritual warfare (Matthew 17:21)
15. When facing judgment (Jonah 3:4-5; Joel 1:14; 2:2)
16. When concerned for others (Ps. 35:13)
17. When communion with the Lord is broken (Mark 2:19-20)
18. When you need guidance (Acts 13:21-23)
19. When ordaining men into the ministry (Acts 14:21-23)
20. When in need of blessings and prosperity (Isaiah 58: 6-9)

## what is Fasting?

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**GOAL:** To give us the origin of fasting and clearly define what fasting is.

### FASTING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The very first reference to fasting that we have in the Bible is when Moses fasted 40 days on Mount Sinai as he received directions about the construction of the Tabernacle and the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9).

The word **“fast”** comes from the Hebrew word **“tsom,”** which refers to **“self-denial.”** It seems that fasting first began as a natural expression of grief. When a person was in great distress or sorrow, they had a loss of appetite and would not eat. For example:

1. I Samuel 1:7—Hannah was so distressed because she was barren that **“she wept and did not eat.”**
2. II Samuel 1:12—David and the men that were with him fasted to express their great sorrow and grief over the death of Saul and Jonathan.
3. II Samuel 3:35—David fasted to express his grief for the death of Abner, son of Ner.
4. I Kings 21:4—King Ahab **“would eat no food”** when he failed in his attempt to buy Naboth’s vineyard.

From these examples, we can conclude that fasting first began as a result of extreme grief or sorrow which caused a loss of appetite. As time went on fasting became a customary practice to show one’s grief to others and then later became a religious practice to turn away God’s anger (Jonah 3:5-9).

However, in the Old Testament, people did not fast just to express their grief and sorrow; nor did they fast simply to turn away God’s wrath and anger, but they fasted for:

- Answers (Daniel 9:3; 10:2, 3)
- Direction (Ezra 8:21-23)
- Protection (Esther 4:15, 16)

### FASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We have seen how fasting was a common practice among the people of Old. They understood the power of fasting and seeking the face of God through prayer.

Prayer and fasting still work today and are powerful weapons that are available to every Christian who desires to use them.

**“In the New Testament, fasting was a widely practiced discipline, especially among the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist.”** (Quoted from Elmer L. Town’s book **“Fasting for Spiritual Break Through.”**)

- Jesus began His public ministry with a forty day fast (Matthew 4:12).
- Paul fasted often (II Corinthians 6:5; 11:27).
- Cornelius fasted and God brought Salvation to his household (Acts 10:30, 31, 44, 47).

Fasting is not only something we read about in the Bible, but it is something Jesus expects us to do. Notice that Jesus, in Matthew 6:16 (Sermon on the Mount) said **“When ye fast,”** not **“if”**. Jesus assumed we would pray, pay our tithes and offerings, fast and forgive. To Jesus, these disciplines were as natural as breathing, sleeping or eating and He presumed they would naturally happen in the lives of every believer.

When the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus why his disciples did not fast, Jesus answered them in Matthew 9:14, 15 by saying they would fast when He was taken away from them.

It is interesting to note that in the New Testament, the word **“fast”** still refers to **“self-denial.”** Like prayer, fasting takes discipline! Yet when we practice fasting we discover power to overcome barriers and obstacles in our lives; our faith is increased; and healings along with miracles take place.

Fasting is a very powerful tool that brings results. When the disciples could not cast out an evil spirit from a man’s son, Jesus told them that **“this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”** (Matthew 17:21)

Fasting will do what prayer, left on its own, cannot do.

## THREE TYPES OF FASTS

(Taken from Elmer L. Towns’ book **“Fasting for Spiritual Break Through.”**)

**1) The normal fast.** This means going without food for a definite period of time. The duration can be one day, such as the one found in Judges 20:26. Other biblical fast went for three days, one week, one month and as long as forty days.

2) **The absolute fast.** One does not eat or drink. This type should be short. Moses' forty day fast would kill a person without supernatural intervention; one cannot go without water for such a long period of time.

3) **The partial fast.** With this type, one may skip a meal or not eat certain foods for a period of time. For example: John the Baptist, Daniel and the three Hebrew boys along with Elijah are all examples of partial fasts.

One should not fast to prove their spirituality to those around them. Fasting for this reason is wrong! The principle of fasting is still "**self-denial.**" By going without food we are demonstrating to God that we are serious about our need(s) and look to him in prayer for divine help.

Elmer Towns said in his book "**Fasting for Spiritual Break Through**" that "**The purpose of all worship, including fasting, is to change the worshipper in ways that have social and interpersonal impact. We worship not just to gratify ourselves, but also to become empowered to change the world!**"

Through fasting, we become more sensitive to God's Spirit and begin to see how weak we really are and how strong He really is. Fasting allows us to hear the voice of God more clearly as He speaks to us and it causes us to listen to what God wants us to be and do.

## why Fast?

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**GOAL:** To give us some biblical reasons and examples for fasting.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 58:6-8

In our last lesson, we learned how fasting first began and what it means to fast. Now we are going to look at some reasons for fasting.

Have you ever had problems that you simply did not know how to solve? Have you ever had to make tough decisions? What about protection? Through the Word of God we will look at several reasons why Christians should fast.

**Fasting brings results.** In fact, Isaiah 58:6-8 gives us nine reasons why we should fast:

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| (1) | To loose the bands of wickedness                                   |
| (2) | To undo heavy burdens  |
| (3) | To let the oppressed go free                                       |
| (4) | To break every yoke  |
| (5) | To give bread to the hungry and provide the poor with housing      |
| (6) | To cause the people's light to break forth as the morning          |
| (7) | To bring good health   |
| (8) | To cause your righteousness to go before you                       |
| (9) | To cause the glory of the LORD to be your rereward (or rear guard) |

God has designed fasting for all these reasons. Even though the book of Isaiah was written thousands of years ago, they still apply to us today. Through prayer and FASTING, we can find solutions for every problem.

Here are just six reasons why fasting should still be a part of our lives.

### I. FAST for guidance

Fasting causes us to focus on God and allows us to become more sensitive to His Spirit. It was not uncommon for New Testament believers to fast and pray for direction in finding the will of God. For instance, in Acts 13:1-3, direction was given to Paul and Barnabas as a result of fasting.

As Paul and Barnabas traveled to the different cities and towns they continued to teach the importance of prayer and fasting through public example (Acts 14:21-23).

## **II. FAST for intervention**

Fasting gets the attention of God! If you are ever faced with hopeless situations or you are presently in a hopeless situation, begin to fast and pray. It may be that God will see your sincerity and discipline and intervene. He did this for the people of Ninevah. They were hopelessly doomed for destruction, but through prayer and fasting, they gained the attention of God and caused Him to change His mind (Jonah 3:5-10).

## **III. FAST for protection**

This is a proven fact: Prayer and Fasting not only give us divine direction and intervention from God, but it also brings divine protection.

In Ezra 8:21-23, this godly man needed protection for the Jews who were returning to the Promise Land. They had been captives in the land of Persia but were now free to return to their homeland if they wanted to go. But they had a problem. Ezra just told the king that God takes care of His children and looks after them, however, the Jews that Ezra would lead back to their homeland had families, household goods and treasures.

In order for this group to get from Persia to Israel, they had to cross the wilderness. This area was very bad and had lots of thieves who would rob travellers as they journeyed. Ezra had 25 tons of silver; 100 silver articles weighing 150 pounds and 7,500 pounds of gold (Ezra 8:26) to transport to the promise land. And he was scared that this treasure might be stolen. What would he do? He needed protection but he was ashamed to ask the king for some soldiers and horsemen to help protect them against the enemy on the road. After all, he had just told the king how God protects His children. So what did they do? They fasted and prayed for protection and direction - God answered their prayers.

## **IV. FAST for personal needs**

The Bible tells us that God not only supplies our needs but He can also supply some of our wants or desires (Psalm 23:1; 34:9; 37:4, 5; 107:9; Philippians 4:19).

A woman in the Bible named Hannah desired to have a son and she faithfully prayed regarding this matter. Yet it was not until she started fasting that she gained the attention of God and He granted her request (I Samuel 1: 7, 8, 10, 27).

**Note:** Not all of our needs, wants or desires require fasting. Some simply take prayer and then an exercising of our faith in God for the answer(s). However, some require a more diligent approach, that of prayer **and** fasting.

Simply because you fast and pray does not mean all your needs and desires will be met. Although fasting is a powerful weapon in gaining answers from God, it will never go against His will or the principles found in the Bible. An example of this can be found in II Samuel 12, where David fasted for seven days in an attempt to change the judgment of God. He had sinned and committed adultery with Bathsheba and one of the judgments for David's sin was the "**death**" of his baby boy.

If what you are fasting for is wrong, selfish or sinful, fasting will not make it right.

## V. FAST for revival

The majority, if not every, significant revival that has ever taken place since the beginning of time has been a result of prayer and fasting.

## VI. FAST for worship

Romans 12:1, 2 - Fasting is one way we can present our bodies as a "**living sacrifice**" unto God. We are giving up something we like (eating) to spend time in prayer with God. By doing this, we are telling God that "**He takes top priority in our lives.**" Fasting allows us to focus on God and increases our awareness of the things of God. It gives us a proper perspective of life and God.

At the center of true worship lies sacrifice. All throughout the Old Testament we see that worship involved a sacrificial lamb. Sacrifice means "**to give something up which is very important to us.**" Fasting is one method of doing this.

Listen to what the Amplified Bible says in Luke 2:36-37, "**And there was also a prophetess, Anna...She did not go out from the temple enclosure, but was worshipping night and day with fasting and prayer.**"

Worship means "**to pay divine honour to someone or something; it has to do with adoration.**" By fasting, we are making a personal sacrifice of praise and worship to our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And He always takes notice of our praise, worship, and sacrifice.



## when ye Fast?

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SCRIPTURE VERSE: “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:16-18).

### INTRODUCTION

Our memory verse is a quotation from Jesus’ famous *Sermon on the Mount*. Here the Lord is talking about “when” we fast, and is letting us know that if it is not practiced correctly, it will not do us any good. Jesus didn’t take time to explain fasting to the people he was talking to - they must have already known what he meant. So, what IS it, and how do you DO it?

### WHAT IS FASTING ALL ABOUT?

#### What is Fasting?

Many people fast, for many different reasons - people like Socrates and Plato, Polycarp, early Egyptians, Arab physicians, American Indians, and Biblical Hebrews all practiced fasting. They fasted for many different reasons - to preserve good health and youthful appearance, to get in a creative mood, to enhance their mental faculties, as a cure for certain diseases, and even to induce mystic visions and appease their gods. And there are just as many people today fasting for just as many different reasons. But we are concerned with why Jesus spoke of it in His Word and what He said to His followers.

In the Bible, fasting refers to the discipline of completely avoiding food (not eating) for spiritual purposes. Most of the time, fasting was linked with prayer, but we should consider it as something on its own also. We can even call fasting *prayer without words*.

Three main forms of fasting are mentioned in the Bible:

- 1) The normal fast: abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water (Matthew 4:2 - after Jesus fasted 40 days, he was “an hungered” but the Bible says nothing about his being thirsty).
- 2) The absolute fast: abstaining from both food and water (Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9 - normally this type of fast should last no more than 3 days, since the body

cannot go without water any longer than this without beginning to dehydrate.) Moses and Elijah practiced the absolute fast for longer than 3 days, but only under supernatural conditions (Exodus 34:28; Deut 9:9,18; I Kings 19:8).

3) The partial fast: a restriction of diet rather than complete absence of food (Daniel 10:3).

## Why Should I Fast?

There are a number of reasons for fasts, as recorded in the Bible. These are almost ALWAYS accompanied by prayer. The two seem to fit together. Neither one should be avoided, and both are necessary disciplines of a true Christian's life who wants to draw closer to the Lord, but when joined together, they are POWERFUL! Jesus Himself practiced this discipline, and it made a difference in His ministry. Before he fasted, Luke 4:1 says: "*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan. . .*" But AFTER he had fasted, just a few verses later, Luke 4:14 says: "*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. . .*" As our perfect example, Jesus was showing us what happens when we put these two weapons together and use them against the devil - we have more POWER!

Never make the mistake of believing that when you fast, you gain favor with God. Fasting will NOT give you special points in God's eyes. It WILL, however, make your flesh humble and put your mind and heart in a place where you can hear from God and understand His voice more clearly. Anytime we put our flesh under subjection, God can be magnified and lifted up. His plan, purpose and will become more important than my personal, physical needs. Fasting brings that selfish ME under subjection and it is something that I choose to do.

So why choose to humble myself? "The Full Life Study Bible" note for Matthew 6:16 says it like this:

- A. To honor God (Zechariah 7:5; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2)
- B. To humble one's soul before God (Ezra 8:21; Psalms 69:10; Isaiah 58:3)
  - 1. in order to receive more grace (I Peter 5:5)
  - 2. to get closer to God and feel His presence (Isaiah 57:15; 58:6-9)
- C. To mourn over personal sin and failure (I Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2)
- D. To mourn over the sins of the church, nation, and world (I Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2).
- E. To seek grace for a new task and to reaffirm our consecration to God (Matthew 4:2)
- F. To seek God by drawing near to Him and prevailing in prayer against opposing spiritual forces (Judges 20:26; Ezra 8:21, 23, 31; Jeremiah 29:12-14; Joel 2:12; Luke 18:3; Acts 9:10-19).
- G. To show repentance and to make a way for God to change His declared intentions of judgment (II Samuel 12:16, 22; I Kings 21:27-29; Jeremiah 18:7-8; Joel 2:12-14; Jonah 3:5,10).

- H. To save souls from the bondage of evil (Isaiah 58:6; Matthew 17:14-21; Luke 4:18).
- I. To gain revelation, wisdom, and understanding concerning the will of God (Isaiah 58:5-6; 11; Daniel 9:3,21-22; Acts 13:2-3).
- J. To open the way for the outpouring of the Spirit and Christ's return to earth for His people (Matthew 9:15).

## Should We Fast Today?

God's Word is full of examples of people who fasted. In fact, in the Bible, it was a way of life. No one questioned it - they just practiced it.

The nation of Israel had one compulsory annual fast - the Day of Atonement. God explained to Moses: *"It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls by a statue forever"* (Leviticus 16:31). "Afflicting the soul" was another term for fasting. This was a time to deprive the natural appetites and divert attention *inward* to more pressing needs. If all were going to rest, no one could be cooking and washing pots. So, there could be no cooking going on - everybody fasted! God's people were supposed to be denying themselves the usual comforts and distractions of eating. They were to come before God and experience sorrow for their sin and express it by fasting and weeping. It was a very emotional time. It was a time when a whole nation looked to God, instead of looking after their personal needs.

Some understood more about why they were doing it, and that always helps to bring better results! Jesus himself fasted, as did the first church. You can find this talked about in the book of Acts, chapter 13, verses 2-3; chapter 14 verse 23 and chapter 27, verse 33.

So what happens to someone who fasts? Does he starve to death? NO! When practiced properly and with the correct motives, fasting is even good for your health!

The men and women in the Bible who practiced fasting, learned that when they refused natural food, they were more free to focus on God. They saw things spiritually and understood better than they ever had in the rush and worry of routine living. And God focused on them too, with a more direct quickening of His spirit in their hearts and lives.

When we deliberately turn our attention from food and look toward God, we are concentrating on something much more important.

- I. If it is so great, what are some of the good things that happen when I fast?
  - A. **My physical health actually improves:**
    - 1) Overweight persons can actually lose weight.

- 2) By fasting, we conserve the energies of the body that are regularly employed in the digestive system, and send them to be used in other areas of the body.
- 3) There is a physiological REST for your body - a rest of the digestive, glandular, circulatory, respiratory, and nervous systems. When no food is taken, all these systems rest and have much less work to do.
- 4) The fast is the best way of increasing the elimination of waste from the blood and tissues.

**B. Fasting does wonderful things for the mind also.** The five senses become more acute during a fast.

**C. Fasting will help retain a youthful complexion and appearance.** We are only as old as the number of dead cells in our body. Fasting converts dead cells into food fuel and burns them off.

**D. Medical science in recent years has documented what Christ said all along about fasting. The power of evil spirits can be broken or "cast out" through combined efforts of prayer and fasting.** *"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).* Habits such as smoking, drinking, and drug abuse are actually evil spirits through which Satan gains control of a person. Through the power of God's spirit, these evil spirits can be eradicated. However, the lingering physical effects have become a part of the physical body. As the body becomes purified through fasting, there seems to be a built-in resistance against once again polluting it. With all these physical benefits - there must be a spiritual side to something practiced so frequently and by so many in the Bible.

## II. What about Spiritual Benefits?

There are always **MANY** benefits to drawing closer to God - they are actually innumerable. Anytime we get "self" out of the way and get "God" as our main focus, we will truly begin to know Him in His power and glory. From the PBS Lesson

**"Fasting Facts"** we learn some of the ways we benefit spiritually:

- A. Fasting is a VITAL spiritual discipline for ALL believers. Jesus did not say, "IF you fast", but He said, "WHEN you fast. . ."
- B. The Apostle Paul knew fasting helped to control his flesh. Paul fasted often because he wrote, "in fastings often" (II Corinthians 11:27). In I Corinthians 9:27, he said it best: "But I keep my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
- C. Fasting keeps us humble before God (Isaiah 58:5; Psalms 69:10).

- D. Fasting will bring spiritual determination and understanding as we ask God to give us help and direction in our problems (Joel 2:12).
- E. Fasting is our way of telling God how hungry we are for the things of the Spirit rather than just the things of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17; Job 23:12; Matthew 4:4).

## HOW DO I BEGIN FASTING?

With all these benefits and blessings, I surely want to begin. But it is not easy to start denying myself.

- I. If you are completely new to fasting, try easing into it gradually.
  - A. First, decide on a day to fast. It will be best if it is a day you can devote to prayer and time to get into God's Word.
    - 1) Skip the first meal of the day.
    - 2) Drink water when you feel hungry.
    - 3) Spend time in prayer and Bible study.
    - 4) You can break your fast when you normally eat your second meal.
    - 5) This is only a few hours, but it is an important first step.
  - B. Repeat this exercise a week later.
  - C. After 4 weeks, you should feel comfortable about skipping one meal.
  - D. You can then go on to the second step - a WHOLE DAY!
    - 1) Take as much time as possible in prayer and Bible Study.
    - 2) At the end of the day, eat a light meal. (Fruit or porridge may be best.)
- II. Have a PLAN for Fasting
  - A. **Set a Goal/Purpose for your fasting.** Why am I doing this?
  - B. **Repent of any sin in your life.** The death to "self" will usually bring to mind any wrong that is being practiced. Lay it on the altar before God, and leave it there!
  - C. **Prepare physically.** Begin with smaller fasts, and work your way to more extensive ones.
  - D. **Limit Your Activities.** There is nothing wrong with resting more during a fast, since your whole body system is at rest during this time.
  - E. **Plan Prayer Times.** If you don't plan to pray, something will always come up to hinder you.
  - F. **Plan Times of Bible Reading.** During a fast, more than ever, God's Word is "food for your soul."

Many who have vaguely heard of this practice, and who don't really understand it, believe that it is something you do to gain favor with God. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"*. Nothing we do, not even denying our physical self in fasting, can make God love us more or want to answer our prayers sooner. Fasting is for MY benefit - it helps me to humble myself, and get a clearer picture of Jesus. Then I can hear His voice more clearly and with "self" out of the way, I am ready to do His will more quickly!

Remember, you are not heard because you fast, but because of God's mercy. Walking on the "Path of Righteousness" will make fasting much easier, and the results more certain! Let us draw near to God, get "self" out of the way, and walk "in the power of the spirit" that comes through fasting.

Let's look at how Eugene H. Peterson quotes our memory verse in his book, "The Message" (Matthew 6:16-18):

"When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity, but it won't make you a saint. If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing, He'll reward you well."

## **the Benefits and Results of Fasting**

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**GOAL:** In this lesson we will look at the benefits of fasting and then some of the results of fasting.

It was once said, **“We fast and pray for results, but the results are in God’s hands.”**

The benefits of fasting are not only spiritual but physical as well. Fasting does more than increase your sensitivity to the Spirit. It gives you power to break down the many barriers and obstacles in your life.

Some benefits of fasting are:

1 - CLEARs THE MIND

Fasting allows the body to clear itself of toxic products and purifies the blood. This allows people to think clearer and increases the sensitivity of our five senses (seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, and hearing).

2 - GIVES REST TO THE BODY

When we fast, it allows our body to rest. Fasting also gives our body time to purge itself from any impurities or extra waste that is inside.

3 - HELPS BREAK ADDICTIONS

**“It is possible to make an item of food your god by becoming addicted to it. Anything that becomes an addiction displaces God from His rightful throne in our lives.”** (Quoted from Elmer L. Towns’ book “Fasting for Spiritual Break Through.”)

We must be careful not to allow any chemical, food or drink to become our god. Did you know that some sicknesses are the result of too much (addiction) of one particular substance that we once rarely had. A good way to prevent this from happening is to fast periodically.

Not only will we be blessed physically, but we will also be blessed spiritually.

The results of fasting are many and may differ depending upon the person involved. However, here are just a few results of fasting. Once you begin to practice this great discipline you will likely experience many more blessings than the ones given here today.

## RESULTS OF FASTING

1. Your spiritual authority will increase.
2. You will receive clear direction for your life and/or ministry.
3. Fasting will increase your desire to pray.
4. Give you victory over satanic strongholds.
5. Increase your sensitivity and awareness of God's presence.
6. Your faith will become stronger and you will receive more power for spiritual warfare.

## PURPOSE OF FASTING

1. To subdue or bring our body under subjection.
2. To humble our soul (Ezra 8:21).
3. To seek the face of God (II Chronicles 20:3,4).
4. To prepare for Spiritual Warfare (Matthew 17:21).

The principle of fasting is still the same, **“self-denial.”** It is through prayer and fasting that we bring our bodies under subjection and begin to offer unto God sacrifices of praise and worship. Then we start reaping the blessings that come with fasting.

## SOME BLESSINGS FROM FASTING

1. Answered prayer, insight, and restoration (Isaiah 58:9-12).
2. Joy, gladness and cheerfulness will become your companions for life (Zechariah 8:19).
3. God will reward you openly (Matthew 6:17, 18).

I have heard it said before that **“fasting is not a requirement, nor is it a church ordinance that should or must be followed. But rather it is a discipline that strengthens believers, and when properly applied (used) provides answers to our prayers.”**

Remember these five very important points:

- Jesus fasted.
- Jesus expects us to fast.
- Demonic powers are broken through prayer and fasting.
- Fasting brings both spiritual and physical blessings.
- Fasting brings results. It works!

Why not give fasting a place in your life? As a Christian, you will see a difference in your walk with God.

Experience the **POWER** today!