

## ***AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE***

James 5:16 states *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* We have been made righteous by the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 6:11 *"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."* So if we have been made righteous, we can expect our prayers to be effective and powerful.

## ***HOW TO PRAY***

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray Matthew 6:9-13 *"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

Many of us learnt these words as a prayer as children, but Jesus never intended it to be that way. What He was showing His disciples is a way in which to pray.

Jesus said to:

1. Acknowledge your Father in heaven, His holiness, His power and His perfect will for your life and the whole world. Look at the words of David. Psalm 89:5-8 *"The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you."*
2. Ask God's provision for all things; both material and spiritual. Matthew 7:8-11 *"For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"* God wants you to ask Him for things you need because He loves to give gifts to His children. Ask for definite requests – be specific so you can know when God has answered you.
3. Confess your sin to God (he already knows about it) and ask Him to forgive you of your sin towards Him and others. 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* Sometimes the Holy Spirit will prompt you to ask someone to forgive you of something you may have done or said. This can be a wonderful opportunity for healing of relationships both inside the church and to those outside the church.
4. Forgive others of sin they have committed against you. This may mean confronting someone you think has offended or hurt you, and telling them that you have forgiven them; this should be done with godly wisdom. Luke 6:38 *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* We must forgive so that we can be forgiven.
5. Ask God to give you strength to stand when temptation comes. 1 Corinthians 10:13 *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* Temptation is the battle we will always have with our human minds. Satan will find your weaknesses and then put temptation in your way.

### **WHEN TO PRAY**

1. Jesus showed by example. Mark 1:35 *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."* It is very important to set aside time to pray in a quiet place. God wants us to have a relationship with Him. This wouldn't be possible if all we gave Him was a few minutes here and there throughout the day.
2. It would seem as we read about the life of Jesus that, while He was on this earth He spent a lot of time praying. He spent time in quiet places where He wouldn't be disturbed. He prayed with and for His disciples. He prayed to His Father in heaven when He raised the dead. He prayed when He was being nailed onto the cross *"Father forgive them for they don't know what they do"*. Bring to God every circumstance you find yourself in as Jesus did.
3. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 *"Pray continually"*. You can pray continually by setting your thoughts on God and His Word. (see lesson 5) By singing praises and Psalms to Him. You can pray as you are driving your car or travelling to work in the train. When you are reading the Bible. Even when you are in conversation with someone. As you do you'll find you will grow in confidence in your prayer life and God's voice will be clearer the more you hear Him.
4. Jesus took time to listen to what His Father wanted Him to do. John 14:31 *"But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."*

### **LISTENING TO GOD'S VOICE**

It is important to take time to listen to what God is saying to you. Have you ever met someone who talks all the time and never listens? I don't know about you, but I find this kind of person very frustrating and generally I tune out to them. God already knows what's on your heart, so don't just talk; give him time to respond.

It is impossible for the human mind to hear the voice of God. Romans 8:6 says. *"The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;"* And Romans 7:22-23 *"For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members."* We need to be tuned in to the Spirit of God through our spirit which has been made alive through Jesus' sacrifice. 1 Cor 6:17 *"But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit."* If we are united with Him we are one with Him.

### **TEST ALL THINGS**

We don't want to be deceived by cunning demonic spirits. Nor do we want to allow our lives to be dominated by our own human plans and aims, because so many times these are not God's will. God says in Isaiah 55:9: *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

1 Thessalonians 5.21 says. *"Test everything. Hold on to the good."* Every day, we have in our minds, thoughts from our own human reasoning. Also each day, we have thoughts whispered into our minds by demons. So it is necessary for every Christian to know the difference between these and the inner voice of God's Holy Spirit. There are two ways we can test what we feel the Spirit is saying to us.

#### **THE FIRST TEST.**

The first way you can tell whether an inner voice is from God's Spirit or from your own mind or from demonic spirits is to check the Bible. The Holy Spirit will never contradict God's Holy

Scriptures. 2 Tim 3:16 says *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,"* And God can't lie!

**THE SECOND TEST.**

The second way that you can tell if the voice that you hear in your thoughts is the voice of God the Holy Spirit (who is living in your human spirit if you are really walking in a personal relationship to God) is this: You will have a tremendous sense of peace or joy or both in your spirit at the time that these thoughts come into your head. The inner voice and the inner witness often come together.

For example; you are waiting on God in prayer and you have the thought come into your mind that God wants you to go to visit your mother-in-law today to give her spiritual help. At the same time, you have a tremendous sense of peace or joy in your spirit. What do you do? You can't find a Scripture which confirms this thought. So question the thought. Is it a godly thought? Is it something you think God would have you do? Do you have a sense of joy and or peace? "Yes." Then this thought is God telling you by the inner voice of the Spirit to do this.

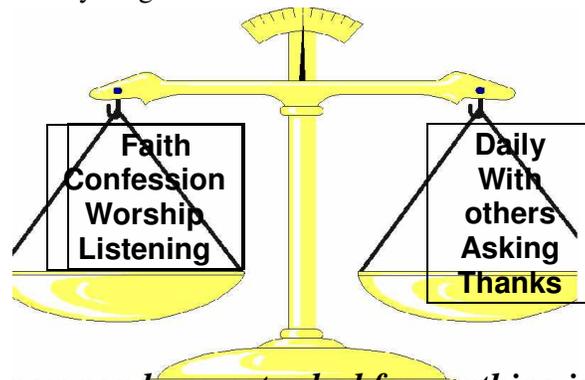
**THE THIRD TEST.**

Often God may give you words, phrases or pictures to personally teach you. If you are unsure of their origin after comparing to the word of God and checking for peace and joy, share them with an experienced believer like your mentor.

Another example; you are driving your car minding your own business when someone cuts in front of you, causing you to brake heavily. Your thoughts say, scream abuse at him or worse get out and hit him. Apply the principles above to this situation and determine if it is God's Spirit speaking to you.

**A BALANCED PRAYER LIFE**

A balanced prayer life includes all the areas we have already covered. You may have noticed from the study that prayer is two way conversation. It includes worship, thanksgiving, confession, listening, asking, being consistent, ie. daily, praying with other Christians and one area we have not covered, praying in faith. Matthew 21:22 *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."* James said in James 4:2 *"You do not have, because you do not ask God."* It seems Jesus said it all. Without faith we can't receive anything.



**John 16:24 *"Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."***

Write out and memorise John 16:24.

1. How do I obtain help for my daily necessities? Hebrews 4:16.
2. What has God done for you that gives you confidence that he will take care of you? Romans 8:31-32.
3. What does John 14:12-14 tell you about answered prayer?
4. What is Jesus Christ according to 1 Timothy 2:5?
5. What must you do to obtain things from God? John 16: 24 & James 4:2
6. What things should you pray for according to the following scriptures?
  - a. Matthew 6:11.
  - b. 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
  - c. Matthew 9:38.
  - d. James 1:5.
7. Why are prayers sometimes not answered? Psalm 66:18 & James 4:3
8. How should we pray to get answers to prayer? 1 John 5:14-15
9. What should your response be when you feel you are praying according to God's will and yet your prayers seem to be unanswered? Luke 18:1-8 & Hebrews 10:35-36
10. What characterised Jesus' life here on earth? Matthew 14:23 & Mark 1:35
11. Read Mark 14:35-36. The night before He was killed, Jesus asked His father whether He could be spared from that time of suffering. But how did He finish His prayer?  
"Yet not \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_"

12. Read Philippians 4:6-7.

- a. What should we do instead of worrying about things? Philippians 4:6
  
- b. What attitude should we have when we ask God for things? Philippians 4:6
  
- c. What will God do for us when we turn things over to Him in prayer? Philippians 4:7

What is the most important truth you have learnt from this lesson?

List any comments or questions you have about any area of interest you would like to discuss here.