

Melva's Corner



From Impotency To Power!

Part IV

July 9, 2007

(I John 5:14, 15)

Central Truth: "Never underestimate the power of intercessory prayer for the salvation of souls."

As we conclude our series on prayer let us look at numbers 5 and 6 of our outline:

1. What is Prayer?
2. Who Can Pray?
3. Why Are You to Pray?
4. To Whom Do You Pray?
5. When Should You Pray?
6. What Should Be Included in Prayer?

When Should You Pray?

There is a sense in which I pray without ceasing, talking to God hundreds of times a day about everything. I begin my day in prayer, worshipping, praising and adoring our great and gracious Creator, God and Father. I acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Lord and Master. By faith, as an act of my will, I appropriate the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I pray for wisdom about the numerous decisions I must make that day. I pray for the salvation of friends and strangers, the healing of the sick, and the spiritual vision of McClain Ministries, as well leaders of other Christian organizations and their ministries. I pray for our leaders and for those in authority over us. I even pray about personal issues. And God answers!

I then I like to spend whatever time is appropriate reading and meditating on God's Word. I often sit quietly before the open

Bible and talk with God. I ask the Holy Spirit, who inspired its writings, to make my reading meaningful and edifying to me.

As I read, I pause to thank God for His loving salvation and provision, to confess any sins in my life that the Scriptures may reveal, to ask Him for the boldness and faith His apostles displayed, and to thank Him for new insights into His divine strategy for reaching the world with the good news of His love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord. I often pause to pray about some special truth or claim a promise.

At noon I unite with you, as we pray the "Hedge of Protection" prayer together.

In the evening, at the 6:00 hour, I unite once again in prayer with you. And continue to worship our Lord, to read His Word and to ask of Him, "Lord, is there anything in me that is displeasing to You, anything I need to confess?" If the Holy Spirit reveals any sins and weaknesses, I confess them and claim by faith God's victory for my life. Then I can know that since my last conscious thoughts are of Him, my subconscious thoughts will continue to worship Him all night long. Thus when I awaken, my first thoughts will be of our Savior and Lord.

Group prayer is vital to the Christian's prayer life and yet few meetings are more dull, unattractive and boring than the average group prayer meeting. The reason is simple. The majority of Christians involved in the group have not spent time with God in private worship and prayer; consequently, they have nothing to say to Him in public except memorized prayers patterned after older Christians who have learned their way of praying from still others. Our answer to this issue is the virtual energized group prayers we have undertaken in the months of July, August and September.

How much more exciting it is to teach the group to talk to God as though He were actually present, as indeed He is. This permits spontaneous, Spirit-directed prayer in which one area of praise or petition at a time is brought to Him as the Spirit brings subjects to mind.

What Should Be Included in Prayer?

Certain basic elements should be included in prayer. These can be easily remembered by the word "ACTS," an acronym for the following words:

- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication

However, "**ACTS**" is merely a guideline and not a rigid sequence which you must follow in your prayers.

Let's consider each of these words.

Adoration. To adore God is to worship and praise Him, to honor and exalt Him in your heart and mind and with your lips. Prayer is often misunderstood as a vague, mystical element in one's relationship to a Holy, awesome God. But the Word of God does not teach this. Rather, it teaches that God, our Father, desires the fellowship of His children.

Your relationship to your Heavenly Father should be one of complete trust, faith and obedience. Likewise, your prayer should express your complete trust in Him and reflect your confidence that He hears you. As a result, you approach Him in adoration and praise, with reverence and awe, with love and gratitude.

Reading aloud psalms of praise and other similar portions of Scripture can greatly enrich your prayer time. A cold, ungrateful heart will soon be warmed, and praising God will come easily.

I happen to pray in just about every conceivable posture: with my eyes open or my eyes close, while I am walking, while I am on my knees, while I am lying in bed, audibly and silently. I invite Him to continue His ministry of "seeking and saving the lost" through me, to use me in whatever way is pleasing to Him.

Confession. The Christian who needs to be restored to fellowship with Christ should begin with confession. Isaiah declares:

"Listen now! The Lord isn't too weak to save you. And He isn't getting deaf! He can hear you when you call! But the trouble is

that your sins have cut you off from God. Because for sin He has turned his face away from you and will not listen anymore."

If your discipline of prayer begins with worshipful adoration of God, the Holy Spirit will reveal any sin in your life that needs to be confessed. By seeing God in His purity, His Holiness and His love, you become aware of your own sin. As the Holy Spirit makes you aware of sin, you will want to confess it.

Always be totally transparent with God. Don't wear a facade or put on an act. He already knows everything about you. So tell Him exactly how you feel at all times. If you do not feel spiritual, tell Him so. If your heart is cold, confess it. If you have been disobedient, confess it and receive His forgiveness and cleansing which will restore you to fellowship with Him.

Thanksgiving. Nothing pleases God more than your consistent expression of faith. And there's no better way to demonstrate your faith than to say, "Thank You."

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that without faith it is impossible to please God. God's Word commands, "Give thanks in all circumstances," because "this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." To fail to give thanks is to disobey God.

If you are filled with God's Holy Spirit and recognize that He controls all things, you can thank God not only for the many blessings of each day, but also for adversities. James says, "Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow." The apostle Paul records, "we can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us - they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady."

May I suggest that you meditate quietly on all of your daily blessings, such as your salvation through knowing Christ, assurance of sins forgiven, the opportunity to serve Christ, the chance to go to school, your good health, family of loved ones, a good job, food and clothing? Thank God for each one of them.

Giving thanks demonstrates that you really do trust God. Expressing your faith pleases God and enables Him to make Himself strong in your behalf; whereas a critical, unbelieving spirit displeases God and hinders His efforts to bless and enrich your life and to use you for His glory.

Supplication. For many Christians, prayer is like window shopping - they spend much time looking but never buy anything. Supplication includes petition for your own needs and intercession for others. You are to pray for everything and in specific terms. Paul admonishes:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do this you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

As you talk to God, pray that your inner person may be renewed and quickened - be made alert and alive, vital, refreshed, always sensitive to and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Pray for wisdom and guidance, pray for strength to resist temptation, pray for comfort in time of sorrow - pray for everything. There is nothing too small or too great to bring before the Lord.

Then pray for others. Christians often do not realize the importance of intercession. The apostle Paul continually prayed for his converts. He also asked them to pray for him. You should pray for other Christians and encourage them to pray for you.

Let me illustrate the importance of this. In 1960 I read a fascinating Christian news article, it seems that there was a Mau Mau uprising that gripped Kenya in terror. During that time, missionaries Matt and Lora Higgins had to drive through the heart of Mau Mau territory on their way to Nairobi. They were well aware that both Kenyans and missionaries had met violent death at the hands of Mau Mau terrorists in that very area.

After dark, about seventeen miles from Nairobi, their Land Rover stalled. Matt tried in vain to repair the vehicle in the darkness. Fearfully, the couple locked themselves in the car

and tried to sleep. Together, they prayed **Psalm 4:8** aloud, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."

When they awoke, Matt repaired the Rover, and they were soon in Nairobi. The following week, a local pastor told the missionaries what had happened while they slept. **Three terrorists had crept up to their car, intending to kill them. But when the Mau Mau saw sixteen men surrounding the Rover, they fled in fear!**

Matt and Lora were thrilled - and puzzled. "What sixteen men?" they wondered.

Weeks later, back in America, the rest of the story came to light when a friend asked them, "Have you been in any danger lately?"

Matt told Him about the Mau Mau, the stalled car and the sixteen men. The friend nodded excitedly. "On March twenty-third," He said, "God burned my heart for you. I called the men at our church, and sixteen of us met together for emergency prayer on your behalf!"

No doubt heaven will reveal endless accounts of how God has used intercessory prayer to protect His people and to advance His kingdom.

Always pray daily for your husband or wife, for your children and for your parents. Then pray for your neighbors and friends.

Pray for various other Christians to whom God has given special responsibility. Pray for presidents and kings and for all those in authority over you.

Pray especially for the salvation of souls, for a daily opportunity to introduce others to Christ and to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our generation. Begin with your community. Pray for and seek to find one or more Christian friends with whom you can establish prayer partnerships.

Never underestimate the power of intercessory prayer for the salvation of souls.

I can identify with you if you have been praying for a son, daughter, spouse or friend and have not yet seen results. However, I encourage you to trust in God's timing. He is sovereign and will answer your prayer in His special way, at His special time.

I encourage you to receive this special word of assurance from God: He desires the soul of your loved one, friend or neighbor even more than you do.

God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Just claim the promise of I John 5:14,15, "**We are sure of this, that He will listen to us whenever we ask Him for anything in line with His will. And if we really know He is listening when we talk to Him and make our requests, then we can be sure that He will answer us.**" Then pray for your loved ones and friends with confidence that He will hear you and answer your prayers as He promised.

The ACTS pattern - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication - has helped many Christians to develop a more well-rounded prayer life in communication with their loving Heavenly Father.

How can you expect answers to your prayers? Four imperatives must be followed: abide, ask, believe, receive. Let's look at each of these for a moment:

Abide. Jesus says abiding is the key to successful praying. "If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." in other words, if you are abiding in Christ - if your life is totally yielded to Him and His Word is abiding in you so that you know His will - you can ask anything you want because your will is to do His will.

Abiding, then, is simply living a life of faith and obedience in the fullness for the Holy Spirit, surrendered to the Lordship for Christ with no unconfessed sin, and being totally available to God.

Ask. If you expect answers to your prayers, you must ask. James says: "You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

Jesus says, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seek finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

The unsolved problems in the world are so great they are almost without number. People are still sick; souls are yet unreached for Christ; evil people still wield ungodly political and financial power; and many injustices continue - largely because the children of God do not ask!

Believe. Jesus promises in Matthew 21:22, "**If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.**" Believing is at the heart of answered prayer. But how do you get this faith to believe? Should you try to work up some kind of state of mind that will in some way equal faith? Of course not.

God does not require you to have great faith. You simply are to have faith in a great God. Jesus says:

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

James instructs you to "ask in faith without any doubting" for the double-minded person cannot expect God to answer His prayers.

You see, it's the quality, not the quantity, of the faith that is important.

Faith comes from God. It is not something you try to muster on your own. A life of faith is experienced only by those who walk in obedience. you cannot be on the throne of your life and still pray in faith. You will never meet a person who has great faith in a great God who refuses to obey the God in whom he is commanded to place his trust.

The Holy Spirit uses three basic means to produce faith in the one praying.

First, He uses the Word of God. As you study the Scriptures you learn more and more about the character of God - His love, His wisdom, His power, His works, His sovereignty. The more you know of God, the more you trust Him. "Faith," Paul writes, "comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Who is the Living Word!

Second, He uses fellowship with other Christians and various circumstances and experiences. For example your faith in God grows as you observe a friend being used of God to introduce others to Christ. When he shares his experience with you, this encourages you to believe that God can use you, too.

Third, He uses strong impressions or convictions. Paul recorded in Philippians 2:13, "**It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**"

For example, I know of five young high school students who began to sense their responsibility to God according to Matthew 28:18-20. Each of these students felt impressed to make a list of three friends whom they wanted to claim for Christ. The first week they met daily to pray that these friends would sense their need of God. The second week they prayed to be instruments of God. The third week they prayed for opportunities to speak to their friends about Christ. That week fifteen students received the Lord.

Receive. By faith, claim the answer to your request. If you know you are abiding in Christ and are controlled by the Holy Spirit and praying according to the Word and will of God, you can expect God to answer your prayer. So be prepared to receive the answer. Imagine right now that you are receiving the answer to your request, and begin to thank God for it.

In 1954 Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile. It had never been broken in all the centuries of recorded history, but Bannister believed it could be done. He developed a mental picture of himself breaking the four-minute mile record, and he did it. Since 1954, hundreds of other athletes have broken the four-minute mile, simply because Roger Bannister proved that it could be done.

If an individual with only human resources is able to accomplish outstanding success, how much more can you accomplish when you place your faith in the omnipotent God and draw upon His supernatural, inexhaustible resources?

It is a simple fact that whatever you vividly envision, ardently desire, sincerely believe and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass - assuming, of course, that there is scriptural authority for it.

Consider, for example, the Great Commission. For many years since that memorable moment when God gave me the vision for this ministry, His ministry and for the world, I have been strongly impressed that the Holy Spirit wants the Great Commission fulfilled in our generation. Since that original deep impression in 1984, the Great commission has been my number one priority as an expression of my love for our Lord and my desire to obey Him.

I have a vivid mental picture of what fulfilling the Great Commission will involve - saturating a world of more than six billion people; discipling tens of millions; training key leader representatives in every one of the 210 nations and protectorates of the world; and using every modern means of technology - science, radio, television, satellites, jet travel, high-speed presses and audio-visuals in all forms - to communicate God's love worldwide.

I see clearly with my mind's eye a day in the immediate future when billions of people on earth will become aware of the great truths concerning God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ and will crown Him Lord of lords. I know that the fulfillment of the Great Commission is the will of God because it is His command and the desire of His heart, and I ardently long to have it come to pass.

Furthermore, I sincerely believe that the Great Commission will be fulfilled because it is God's idea, not man's. It is inconceivable to me that our Lord would have given us the command without giving us the needed resources with which to fulfill His command.

And finally, because I so vividly imagine, ardently desire, and sincerely believe in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in my generation, I can enthusiastically act upon it by giving

myself completely to the task and helping to mobilize millions of others toward its fulfillment.

In your own life - your own home, community, state, nation and the world where you personally are concerned - determine, on a clearly scriptural basis, what God would have you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon to help fulfill the Great Commission.

Scriptural References:

"We are sure of this, that He will listen to us whenever we ask Him for anything in line with His will. And if we really know He is listening when we talk to Him and make our requests, then we can be sure that He will answer us." (I John 5:14, 15)