

The Change the World School of Prayer

DICK EASTMAN



... because everyone needs Jesus

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Introduction

Your Invitation to Enroll

One of the most quoted prayer promises in Scripture involves God’s message to Jeremiah, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3, NIV). Generations later the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson would write, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of!”

Little could I have known 40 years ago when first developing *The Change the World School of Prayer* how remarkably God would bring these truths alive in my own life and allow them to touch so many others. We rejoice to have seen more than 3 million believers globally, from scores of denominations and evangelical traditions in over 100 nations, benefit from this teaching. Praise God for one more—you!

The insights shared on the following pages are the result of more than four decades of in-depth study and personal practice regarding the subject of prayer, in addition to the close observation of thousands of hours of actual prayer. Prior to developing *The Change the World School of Prayer*, I had the privilege of founding a live-in prayer center in Sacramento, California, where spiritually mature high school graduates, serving as prayer interns before going on to college or university, formed an around-the-clock prayer force. Most gave an entire year to this ministry. It was one of the first 24/7 youth prayer movements of which I have been aware. The following study is based, in large part, on the insights learned from the many prayer experiences and interactions from these students. These resident prayer warriors, some



100 young people during a five-year period, prayed systematically for almost 40,000 continuous hours. Not a single hour was missed during that time—even during Christmas and other holidays. They unknowingly provided me a unique laboratory for the study of practical prayer. Thus, the insights you will receive in this study are based on actual prayer experiences involving many thousands of hours of prayer itself, including my own daily times of prayer over several decades.

Has it been worthwhile? When I first began this amazing journey, as these young intercessors prayed for a global harvest of souls day and night, I could not have imagined what lay ahead. As I write this 40th anniversary edition of *The Change the School of Prayer* I can report that the ministry I serve as leader, Every Home for Christ, has followed up more than 17 million decisions and responses to our home-to-home evangelism activities globally in just the last 12 months! We continue to see over 45,000 decisions and responses followed up with Bible lessons daily throughout the world. Prayer, indeed, works! All of this has helped me in compiling this study.

Additionally, much research has gone into the careful review of hundreds of the most widely read books written on this vital subject over many generations, including from a variety of Christian traditions—some more contemporary and others from past centuries. You will especially benefit from the insights of those great praying giants of past history who learned the practical power of prayer through their often turbulent times. You will also notice we have developed the major lessons (called Lecture Halls) into segments referred to as “study halls,” each including an opportunity to journal your personal response to that particular section.



You also may find the 13-week checklist in the appendix helpful in taking you through this study more leisurely over a three-month period, applying various aspects of prayer and journaling your insights as you go.

Of course, God's Word has been our primary source for all that follows. We also are greatly indebted to the many publishers who have granted permission to quote extensively from the writings of those who have learned the power of prayer and have left us these meaningful written insights. Please see the bibliography at the back of this book for a listing of materials quoted on these pages.

I especially want to encourage you to put into practice these principles and truths in the immediate days ahead, first by making a daily appointment to meet with our Lord in prayer, and then by forming and participating in a prayer group that meets on a regular basis.

VERY IMPORTANT!

This manual is designed to be used in conjunction with seven "live" lecture halls or main lessons, each taught in three 20-to-25 minute segments by the author. These 21 easy-to-follow training sessions provide a much more in-depth biblical foundation for the insights on these pages. (This training is available online at ehc.org/ctwsop.) Although the insights in these pages stand alone in their value, the reader will benefit much by participating in the video or audio teaching. A meaningful student workbook accompanies the live lessons and is also available online.



EXPLANATION OF FOOTNOTES

Following many quotes in this book the reader will find two sets of numbers separated by a back slash. (Example: 22/33). The number at the left is the book number as it appears in the Bibliography. The number at the right of the slash represents the page number of the quote. If only one number appears this refers only to the book itself as the page number was unknown. In some cases quotes have been gleaned from sermon notes and clippings placed in our hands by friends. Because of insufficient background data, including some authors or sources, several quotes unfortunately are included without due credit. We humbly appreciate the reader's understanding.

May God inspire and equip you as you prepare to enroll in this special School of Prayer, sitting at the feet of Jesus and partnering with Him to change our world.

Dick Eastman

International President
Every Home for Christ



CHAPTER 1

Lecture Hall One

PRAYER: UNTAPPED POWER

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STUDY HALL ONE

WHY A SCHOOL OF PRAYER?

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Lecture Hall One

STUDY HALL ONE

WHY A SCHOOL OF PRAYER?

A wise praying saint once declared, “Every believer should go into the School of Prayer with Christ and actually learn the secret of prayer, the precious ministry of intercession.” (9/25) Indeed, there is no greater ministry available to all followers of Jesus than the ministry of prayer. Unfortunately, too little has been done in recent years to train people in this crucial discipline of the Christian life. Even a century ago, E. M. Bounds pointedly asked, “Is prayer a fixed course in the schools of the church? In the Sunday school, the home, the colleges, have we any graduates in the school of prayer? Is the church producing those who have diplomas from the great university of prayer?” (5/64)

The study that waits ahead is not primarily designed to teach Christians how to pray. Rather, we would like to teach Christians about prayer, hopefully inspiring them to do it. We have observed from years of experience that prayer is not learned in a classroom but in the closet. E. M. Bounds explains, “Praying is the best school in which to learn to pray, prayer the best dictionary to define the art and nature of praying.” (20) Hope MacDonald, in her meaningful book, *Discovering How to Pray*, said with equal intensity, “We can read all the books that have ever been written about prayer, but



until we actually choose by an act of our will, to pray, we will never learn.” (35/17) Truly, prayer is something to be learned and developed. Elizabeth Prentiss beautifully described it as “learning the mysterious art of prayer by an apprenticeship at the throne of grace.” (32/35)

The reader may be surprised to learn that Christ’s disciples never asked their Master to teach them to preach, but rather to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Imagine, in the whole of the Gospels the disciples asked the Son of God only one time to teach them a particular aspect of the Christian walk. They did not ask, “Lord please teach us five steps for effective church growth.” Nor did they ask for training in personal evangelism, but rather that Jesus would teach them to pray. Further, they simply wanted to learn to do it, not how to do it. The enemy rejoices when Christians spend more time discussing prayer than practicing prayer. Thus, our School of Prayer is not a “how to do it” school, but simply a “do it” school. The words that follow are intended to inspire you to begin your prayer journey and keep at it for a lifetime.

Our intention, then, is not merely to write another book on prayer, but to compile a motivational challenge that encourages the reader to pray more meaningfully, faithfully, and even systematically. Leonard Ravenhill was correct when he penned: “Books on prayer are good, but not good enough. As books on cooking are good but hopeless unless there is food to work on, so with prayer. One can read a library of prayer books and not be one whit more powerful in prayer. We must learn to pray, and we must pray to learn to pray.” (15/154)

Prayer, then, is a school in and by itself. Only as we pray do we learn more about this holy discipline. As one



writer declares, “It would be well to remember the more we pray, the more power we have in prayer. Faith is not like gasoline, in danger of running out if we go too far. It is more like a muscle which strengthens from practice.” (18/77)

The study ahead is designed to reveal the unfathomable potential of God’s power released through prayer. We challenge students of prayer to enroll with total dedication in this challenging school. Passionately seek to become more like Jesus in every facet of your Christian walk, including the all-encompassing aspect called prayer.

Back to School

In his classic book, *Intercessory Prayer*, James McClure makes a startling declaration: “The history of the Christian church never has been completely written. The deeds done by men in the name and for the sake of Christ have been told. These deeds make a remarkable record: the record of all martyrdoms, of all missionary advances, of all philanthropic conquests. These 1,900 years have witnessed scenes that are well calculated to stir the blood and make brave the heart of the student of church history.”

Dr. McClure concludes with this chilling comment, “But nothing except exterior effects and the supposed motives back of these exterior effects have as yet been described. The throne of grace, out from which go the answers to prayer, is curtained. No one has been able to draw aside that curtain and show the world the spiritual helps that in answer to prayer have issued from that throne.” (32/31)



Praying Christians must change this. It is time for believers everywhere, of all denominations, to open the curtain of God's power to reach all dying people on this planet with the Good News of Jesus. We must go back to school—the School of Prayer. There are several critical reasons for this vital call to prayer that provide a foundational basis for this entire study. These set the tone for all that follows.

1. Prayer will help Christians everywhere fulfill the Great Commission.

It could be statistically proven that Christ's commandment to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), would be impossible for centuries at the present rate of general missionary endeavor. In a recent year a nationally publicized news article listed the world's fastest growing denominations. The denomination listed first had seen 1,500 new converts per day result from their evangelistic endeavors at home and abroad. At that rate, which at first glance seems exciting and meaningful, the possibility of reaching over 2 billion unevangelized persons would require 3,652 years of effort. Even more startling, such a feat could only be achieved with zero population growth, which is an impossibility. The answer, therefore, lies in intercessory prayer (a statement I believe the whole of the study before us will prove). Prayer is the power that will make all serious evangelistic organizations successful in doing their part to help literally fulfill the Great Commission.



2. Prayer will help unify Christians for this task of world evangelization.

To be frank, true unity in the church is a considerable challenge. Dr. Harold Lindsell, in discussing the dynamics of prayer in his provocative book, *When You Pray*, says, “Christendom in its largest and most inclusive sense is in disagreement about many essential and non-essential matters. Some disagreements are so great that they divide one group of Christians from another. But in the matter of prayer, all of the communions which in any sense claim to be Christian are in agreement. All of them confess their belief in the necessity and efficacy of prayer. In fact, prayer is a universal phenomenon common to Christian and non-Christian religions. Whatever god or gods non-Christians worship, they invoke them in prayer. Christians regard non-Christian prayer as counterfeit, but we may remember that the very existence of the counterfeit presupposes the existence of the real.” (27/5)

Thus, prayer is vital in the task of world evangelization because it brings people from varied backgrounds together at the throne of grace. Certainly if we can learn to pray together, we can learn to work together.

3. Prayer will take us to new heights personally.

Those privileged to hear Charles Spurgeon preach were witness to Spirit-anointed sermons bathed in hours of prayer. Once, while preaching on the subject of prayer and highlighting Ezekiel’s vision of a river (Ezekiel 47), Spurgeon declared, “In the ark of salvation we find a lower, second, and third story; all are in the ark but all are not in the same story. Most Christians, as to the river of



experience, are only up to the ankles; some others have waded until the stream is up to the knees; a few find it breast-high; and but a few—oh! how few—find it a river to swim in, the bottom of which they cannot touch.” (34/15)

The preacher goes on to explain how we can plunge into this river, “My brethren, there are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle’s eye of acumen and philosophic thought have never seen; and there are secret paths which the lion’s whelp of reason and judgment hath not as yet learned to travel. God alone can bear us there; but the chariot in which He takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged, are prevailing prayers.” (34/15)

Wise is the Christian who learns to pray with such prevailing power. He or she not only participates in changing the world, but sees a continual change in his or her own personal life.

4. Prayer reaches everywhere for every need.

In the inspirational book on prayer, *Mustard*, by Virginia Whitman, there is a thought that aptly illustrates this fourth reason we need a School of Prayer. The author carefully reminds the reader, “There is no other item so universally available to mankind as prayer. From the bottom of the sea to the moon itself prayer can be offered. Jonah prayed from the belly of a fish. At the equator or the Arctic, prayer may be voiced to God. From the humid jungles of the Amazon or the barren wastes of Siberia, prayer may ascend to God. There is no location, situation, or nation, where prayer cannot be breathed.” (7/71) We are compelled to teach the importance of prayer because its power is far-reaching and may penetrate where even missionaries cannot go.



5. Prayer will help Christians focus on the supreme task of the church.

In an age of modernization and efficient programming it is easy for Christian ministries to forget their supreme reason for being: the conversion of the lost. It would be well if many of these programs were laid aside for a time in order that we might literally answer the challenge of Jesus in reaching every person on earth with the message of His love. True, some programs may be good, but not all programming truly builds the kingdom of God. One of the finest preachers of the early 20th century, Dr. R. A. Torrey, addressed this grave concern when he preached, “Beyond a doubt, one of the great secrets of the unsatisfactoriness and superficiality and unreality and temporary character of many of our modern, so-called revivals is that so much dependence is put upon man’s machinery and so little upon God’s power, sought and obtained by earnest, persistent, believing prayer that will not take ‘no’ for an answer.”

Dr. Torrey concludes, “We live in a day characterized by the multiplication of man’s machinery and the diminution of God’s power. The great cry of our day is work, work, work, organize, organize, organize, give us some new society, tell us some new methods, devise some new machinery; but the great need of our day is prayer, more prayer and better prayer.” (6/190)

6. The experiences of thousands of praying Christians prove prayer works.

In teaching people the power and practice of prayer, we are not venturing into unexplored territory. The testimony of Christians everywhere, from every generation, emphatically declares prayer works. Preaching on prayer, G. Campbell Morgan explained,



“We base our belief in the possibility of prayer upon the history and experience of man. When science makes experience the universal test of reality, how can men rationally exclude the experience of the saints of all ages in this matter? They tell us they have asked and had; sought and found; knocked and the door has been opened. In answer to this, critics affirm they were all perfectly sincere in believing this, but they were mistaken. Such a statement is a test of patience to which I am not equal.” (31/24)

The noted preacher carefully concludes, “To be told that not one or two but hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of human beings, not of one age or temperament or geographical position but in every age, of all temperaments and from every region, through weeks and months and years and decades and centuries and millenniums, have all been deceived is to be asked to believe something far more incredible than anything that Christianity affirms is true.” (31/25)

Indeed, the evidence is overwhelming; prayer is effectual and makes a difference in the destinies of men and nations. O Lord, teach me to pray.



Additional Insights



Lecture Hall One

STUDY HALL TWO

DEFINITIONS OF PRAYER

A meaningful teaching on the subject of prayer ought to begin with simple definitions concerning prayer. There are many ways prayer might be described since prayer touches so many aspects of the Christian life. Here are but a few:

1. Prayer is the first step to knowing Jesus Christ.

It is impossible for a person to experience Jesus Christ apart from prayer. The Bible makes this very plain: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13, NIV). Calling is a prerequisite to salvation and calling is prayer. If the one who calls is saved, the one who does not call is not saved. Thus, one’s very salvation experience begins in prayer.

Following our initial salvation experience, all spiritual growth is in direct proportion to our prayer life. William Krutza says, “The heart of an effective Christian witness is devotion to Jesus Christ. This devotion finds its greatest expression in prayer. It is kept alive through the continual practice of prayer.” (28/59)



2. Prayer is recognizing the presence of God.

Simply stated, prayer is the occasion that makes it possible to become acquainted with our heavenly Father. It may or may not involve words or emotion. A young Christian once said, “Prayer finally comes to mean not to express an opinion, but to feel a presence.” (11/148)

3. Prayer is man’s means to know God intimately.

This is more than just becoming acquainted with God, as suggested above. The husband must be more than merely acquainted with his wife; he must know her intimately. One prayer warrior wisely explains, “He knows not God who knows not how to pray. He has never studied God who has not had his intellect broadened, strengthened, clarified and uplifted by prayer.” (20)

4. Prayer is to embrace and apply God’s promises.

The Bible is filled from cover to cover with promises available to those who tap God’s reservoir of power. “Prayer,” declared the Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Trench, “is not overcoming God’s reluctance, it is laying hold of God’s willingness.” (14/16) Certainly God is willing to answer prayer or He would have excluded prayer from the Christian’s arsenal of weapons. All that remains is for man to embrace these vast promises by that means provided by God—prayer.

5. Prayer is the soul on its knees.

Hundreds of books on prayer line library shelves and thousands of sermons have been preached on the subject. Of all that has been said on the subject of prayer, Victor Hugo’s concise definition wonderfully



relates the true meaning of prayer: “There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.” (14/86) Prayer, then, is an attitude of the heart that humbles itself before a living God, silently declaring, “I need You.”

6. Prayer is the path to strength and peace.

Rare is the Christian who boasts of personal peace but does not pray. Prayer is the very key that unlocks the peace of God. E. M. Blaiklock explains, “Prayer is vital. It is the pathway to tranquility and strength of soul. A man’s prayers are the measure of his Christianity, understanding of spiritual matters, and experience of God. To fail in prayer is to fail in all else. Prayer is the place of testing and conflict; for prayer challenges all doubt, all disillusionment, all material, and cardinal preoccupation.” (14/1)

7. Prayer is man’s means to touch God.

Scripture relates an occasion where a vast crowd surrounded Jesus, pressing against Him with great curiosity. With unusual sensitivity our Lord declared, “Somebody touched me.” (See Luke 8:43-46.) The disciples were quick to respond that many had touched the Savior in those moments. But Jesus powerfully answered, “No, someone has made a demand on my ability” (Twentieth Century Translation). Here we discover an especially meaningful definition of prayer. It is the Christian’s means to tap God’s ability. We are, in a sense, making a demand upon His power when we pray. A wise preacher declared, “There cannot be any touching of the Master without the Master knowing it. When need touches Him, it makes a demand upon His ability to meet that need; and prayer is the way in which we touch Him.” (9/8)



8. Prayer is man's way to understand God's plan for his or her life.

There is but one way to know the will of another and that is either to speak personally with the person or read what the person gives you in writing. The same is true in our relationship with God. To know His plan for our lives we must read His Word and talk with Him regularly. David Hubbard explains, "Prayer reminds us of our constant need for God and reassures us of His presence with us. Prayer is part of God's plan for our growth and for His program in the world. In prayer we don't tell God what to do; we find out what He wants us to do." (4/14)

If I fail to speak with my wife on a given day I do not understand her desires concerning me for that particular day. How, then, can one know the desires of God for his life apart from prayer? The great missionary-statesman Dr. E. Stanley Jones shares, "In prayer you align yourself to the purpose and power of God and He is able to do things through you that He could not do otherwise...for this is an open universe, where some things are left open, contingent upon our doing them. If we do not do them, they will never be done. So God has left certain things open to prayer—things which will never be done except as we pray." (13/5) Years ago I found myself amplifying these words with this axiom: "Something happens when I pray that does not happen if I don't. Therefore, if I have not prayed today, something has gone undone in God's kingdom plans for my life and for the lives of those I might have touched through my prayers."



9. Prayer is doing business with God.

To take time alone with our heavenly Father not only involves fellowshiping with Him, it is actually doing business with the very Ruler of the Universe. Virginia Whitman explains, “When you have a desire or need for something, be it a commodity or a service, tangible or intangible, you make contact with a person or firm you presume could give you satisfaction. What follows is termed ‘doing business’ with them. Prayer is doing business with God, and is every bit as practical as any earthly transaction.” (7/84)

10. Prayer is God’s gift of power.

It is completely inconceivable that a follower of Jesus can accomplish all the tasks assigned by God without the power of prayer. Harold Lindsell advises, “The pilgrim who walks through the world that is not his final home needs all the help he can get. God in His wise providence has provided many kinds of help. One of the greatest is His gift of prayer.” (27/8) Simply stated—no prayer, no power; no power, no victory. The opposite of victory is, of course, defeat.

11. Prayer is serving on an executive committee for world evangelization.

Some Christians have misunderstood prayer, thinking it is only a time of fellowship with the Father, with the highest goal being one’s personal growth. True, prayer is this, but it is also much more. E. W. Kenyon preached, “Prayer means that we have come boldly into the throne room and we are standing in [God’s] presence. It is more than bringing Him on the scene. It is going into the presence of the Father and Jesus in an



executive meeting, laying our needs before them and making our requisitions for ability, for grace, for healing for someone, for victory for someone, or for financial needs.” (9/8) To pray for world evangelism, thus, is to serve on a “Great Commission Fulfillment Committee” that meets daily in the courts of heaven. Prayer is not only a time of fellowship, it is a time of intercessory action.

12. Prayer is two people in love.

When two people fall in love it is difficult for either to think of anything but the object of their love. Prayer is the aspect of our Christian experience involving this type of love for God. Hope MacDonald explains, “I like to think of prayer as a conversation between two friends who love and understand each other. Prayer is the key that opens the door to a whole new world—a world lived in active, conscious presence of the living God. It becomes the foundation of everything we do. Jesus Christ died on the cross to make this communication possible!” (35/14)

13. Prayer is giving God access to our need.

Wise are the words, “To pray is nothing more involved than to let Jesus into our needs. To pray is to give Jesus permission to employ His power in the alleviation of our distress. To pray is to let Jesus glorify His name in the midst of our needs. To pray is nothing more involved than to open the door, giving Jesus access to our needs and permitting Him to exercise His own power in dealing with them.” (2/12,13)

Here we find a most basic definition of prayer. Prayer is to verbalize our dependence on God concerning all our human efforts. Unfortunately, many



Christians lack the blessing of God because of an unwillingness to open themselves, through prayer, to His presence. Concerning this shortcoming, E. M. Bounds suggests, “Prayer is the language of a man burdened with a sense of need. It is the voice of the beggar, conscious of his poverty, asking of another the things he needs. Not to pray is not only to declare there is nothing needed, but to admit to a non-realization of that need.” The wise warrior concludes, “This is the state in which the Holy Spirit, in His messages to the seven churches in Asia, found the Laodicean Church, and ‘the Laodicean state’ has come to stand for one in which God is ruled out, expelled from the life, put out of the pulpit. The entire condemnation of this church is summed up in one expression: ‘Because thou saith, I have need of nothing,’ the most alarming state into which a person, or church, or preacher can come.” (5/106,107) It is, indeed, a frightening thought that a day without prayer is a subtle statement to God that we have everything under control by ourselves.

14. Prayer is the key to the miraculous.

No other aspect of Christian service links us to the miraculous as that of prayer. In his excellent book simply titled, *Prayer*, Norwegian writer O. Hallesby explains, “The work of praying is prerequisite to all other work in the Kingdom of God, for the simple reason that it is by prayer that we couple the powers of Heaven to our helplessness, the powers which can turn water into wine and remove mountains in our own lives and the lives of others, the powers which can awaken those who sleep in sin and raise up the dead, the power which can capture strongholds and make the impossible possible.” (2/80)



15. Prayer is the very breath of spiritual life.

Prayer is to the spirit what breath is to the body. David Hubbard contends, “If we think that prayer is something we do only in dignified ceremonies or desperate emergencies, we have missed its value. We treat prayer as though it were the spice of life but the Bible prescribes it as a vital staple in our diet. We are content with a dash of praise, a pinch of petition, a drop of confession to bring a slight spiritual flavor to our secularity. We sprinkle a shake or two of the supernatural over our basic humanism and call the mixture religion. But God sees prayer as the breath of spiritual life.”
(4/64)



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall Two



Additional Insights



Lecture Hall One

STUDY HALL THREE

PRAYER POWER

An old puritan once proclaimed, “Prayer is a cannon set at the gates of heaven to burst open its gates.” These provocative words take the student of prayer to a closer examination of this power available to Christians. Note several important premises concerning the power of prayer. A premise is something considered obvious because of the evidence to support it. A basic definition of the word “premise” reads: “Something assumed or taken for granted.”

Premise one: The power of prayer is in actuality the power of God released through prayer.

When speaking about the power of prayer, it is important Christians understand we are speaking actually of the power of God released through prayer. As one writer relates, “The power of prayer is no more or no less than the mighty power of God released through the life of a man who stops being an obstacle of God. The power is God’s alone.” (36/44,45)

Tragically, some mistakenly credit spiritual gains and victories only to prayer rather than to the God Who answers prayer. True, prayer releases the power to bring these results, but God is the source of that power. Prayer



isn't the power in and of itself. God deserves the glory for all our answers to prayer.

This thought should add great depth of meaning to our praying. If the power of prayer is truly the power of God, then prayer-power is unlimited. John Lavender relates the story of an elderly widow from the slums of New York who was invited by a wealthy benefactor to spend a weekend at an ocean-side cottage. The woman, who had never enjoyed such luxuries, was awestruck by the beauty of the location. As she stood by the sea on a quiet, sunny afternoon, overwhelmed by the vast expanse of the water, a tear silently found its way down her cheek. When the benefactor asked why she was crying, her reply was simply, "Because it's so wonderful to see something there is enough of." (39/20)

Truly there is enough of God's power available to answer every prayer ever prayed in His will. Leonard Ravenhill writes, "One might estimate the weight of the world, tell the size of the celestial city, count the stars of heaven, measure the speed of lightning, and tell the time of the rising and the setting of the sun—but you cannot estimate prayer-power. Prayer is as vast as God because He is behind it. Prayer is as mighty as God because He has committed Himself to answer it." (15/156) Virginia Whitman adds, "Other activities produce what we can do. Prayer output is what God can do." (7/129) The only limits to prayer, then, are the limits of God. As far as God goes, prayer can go.

Premise two: The power of prayer is all-inclusive.

Our second premise, though closely related to the first, deserves special attention. Prayer, when properly understood and developed, can reach beyond



any barrier and conquer any mountain. Evangelist R. A. Torrey preached, “Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God’s infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer.” (6/16)

There are, no doubt, some who might question Torrey’s bold statement. Yet, this powerful, early 20th-century evangelist had learned by experience that the power of prayer is all-inclusive. There is no circumstance or geographic location where prayer-power is restricted. Prayer can penetrate places where no other power can reach. There is no situation or problem too great for the power of prayer. It leads to all blessings, taps all of God’s power, and brings the prayer warrior into the very presence of God Himself. E. M. Bounds preached, “Prayer has in it the possibility to affect everything which affects us. Here are the vast possibilities of prayer. Wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and heaven are at the command of prayer. Nothing is outside of prayer.” (23) Ralph Herring, in *The Cycle of Prayer*, adds, “Prayer is God’s triumph of spiritual engineering, employing all His gifts and providing unlimited access to all the resources of His being. Prayer is a summit meeting in the very throne room of the universe. There is no higher level.” (16/8) To be sure, all of heaven and all of its blessings lay ready for acquisition before the praying Christian.

Premise three: The power of prayer is largely untapped by God’s people today.

We are reminded of the woman some years ago who was hit by a car and helplessly pinned under the vehicle. Spectators gathered and were making hasty plans to lift the automobile when a man stepped from the crowd and raised the car just enough so that the



woman could be pulled to safety. Later, news reporters asked the man to lift the same car for pictures, but the man was unable to budge it. Apparently he had some “untapped” power waiting in reserve for just such an extraordinary occasion. All he had to do was draw on that power when it was most needed.

The power of prayer is not unlike the hidden power just described. It is resident in believers, waiting only to be unharnessed. Remember, Jesus lives in each of us, and He has all power in heaven and earth among His children. (See Matthew 28:18.)

Like the untapped power latent in the man who lifted the automobile, Christians have God’s power, ready to be tapped by believing prayer. But exactly how do we tap this apostolic power? Ravenhill answers, “If we would return to apostolic practice—waiting upon the Lord for apostolic power—we could then go forth to apostolic possibilities!” (15/92) Indeed, the untapped power of God is only found in waiting before God in prayer. If the possibilities of prayer are truly limitless, the avenues for utilizing prayer are likewise limitless. In our next study hall we mention seven examples to provide the student of prayer a glimpse of what prayer can do.



Lecture Hall One

STUDY HALL FOUR

THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER

1. In prayer there is power for sharing God's Word.

The gifted preacher E. W. Kenyon entreated, "Church history proves that the ministry of prayer makes the ministry of the Word a powerful thing." (9/102) Some time ago an amazing account was reported in one of the overseas offices of Every Home for Christ, the ministry I direct, that well illustrates this thought. An EHC pioneer missionary had taken gospel literature to every home of a small, out-of-the-way village in India before moving on to another neighboring village. After spending a long day in literature distribution, the young national was on his way back to his starting point where a camp had been set up. There with other evangelists he would eat a meal cooked by campfire and spend a well-earned night of rest.

When passing through the village where literature had been distributed earlier, the tired evangelist encountered a teenage boy going from door to door distributing printed messages to the very homes he had earlier visited. It was highly unusual, even beyond belief, that another missionary group was doing a similar work of literature distribution in so remote an area. Anxious to learn the identity of the organization, the evangelist approached the happy young distributor. Almost



immediately he noticed the literature used was identical to messages he had distributed earlier. Surely the Every Home Campaign leadership had not sent two workers into the same area. Further, this teen was much younger than the usual EHC full-time worker. A moment's inquiry revealed the full story.

Earlier that day, when the EHC evangelist initially had delivered literature to every home in that village, the youth sat quietly in the shadow of one of those homes where literature was left. Believing it to be some type of evil propaganda, the boy waited for the evangelist to finish his work and then promptly went to every house, collecting each piece of literature distributed. He told each family that the literature was evil and anti-Hindu, their primary religion. After collecting a small pile of gospel messages, the youth prepared to set these messages of love aflame. With a match in hand, the young rebel suddenly realized he had not read the contents of the booklet, so he couldn't be sure just how evil it was. Before setting the pages on fire the teen read the message of God's grace telling him how he might receive Christ as his personal Savior. Alone on a dusty village path, a new creation was born in Christ. So excited was the teen, that he promptly gathered the literature together and began to go door to door, distributing the messages for the second time that day. It was at this moment the EHC pioneer missionary happened to pass through the village heading for his base camp. The worker could not help but rejoice in how God had answered the prayers of their whole team very early that morning, that God would anoint these messages with special power.

Oh, the power that prayer holds for making the message of the cross a life-changing force in the hands



of even the most unassuming person. The above incident wasn't an accident or coincidence. It was an answer to prayer. And that answer turned a brand new believer, only moments into his conversion, into an evangelist himself!

2. In prayer there is power for birthing and spreading revival.

Having witnessed many great revivals himself, Evangelist R. A. Torrey wrote pointedly on the subject of revival in the church. He declared, "There have been revivals without much preaching; but there has never been a mighty revival without mighty praying." (6/43)

The noted evangelist cites the marvelous spiritual awakening in 1857 throughout America. The revival began when a humble lay-worker in New York City, Joseph Lamphier, became greatly burdened for the lack of spiritual concern in Christ's Body. Lamphier decided to begin a daily prayer meeting for businessmen at noon. Almost no one attended at first. Indeed, the layman was the only person present for most of the first meeting until several others joined him during the last moments of that first hour.

In subsequent meetings only a handful were present. But God honored Lamphier's efforts and before long, spurred on by a bank crash in New York City, as many as 3,000 people or more were attending the meeting. Eventually many prayer meetings began with participants numbering in the tens of thousands. Church historians tell us the great revival that swept America at that time had its roots in Lamphier's first prayer meeting. Eventually hundreds of thousands accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, an awakening that before long averaged



50,000 new converts per week. These same historians believe the revival saved America during very turbulent times. Decades later Torrey would give his opinion: “The whole emphasis was on prayer and our whole nation was shaken by the power of God as it had never been shaken before, and perhaps has never been shaken since.” (6/44)

3. In prayer there is power to move the hand of God.

Christianity will always have some who will dispute this claim, suggesting that prayer has little true effect on the destiny of nations. They contend that a sovereign God has it all pre-programmed. We, however, take the view that prayer moves the hand of God because God says in His Word that such is the case. “Call unto me and I will answer,” He tells Jeremiah (Jeremiah 33:3). A modern writer contends, “The direct power of prayer is, in a sense, omnipotent. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. It secures for the believer the resources of divinity...It is the oratory that gives power to the pulpit. It is the hand that strikes down Satan, and breaks the fetters of sin. It turns the scales of fate more than the edge of the sword, the craft of the statesman, or the weight of scepters. It has arrested the wings of time, turned away the very scythe of death, and discharged heaven’s frowning and darkest cloud in a shower of blessings.” (1/13)

4. In prayer there is power to solve insurmountable problems.

No missionary society or evangelistic organization could honestly suggest their results have been achieved apart from prayer. Someone has said, “Prayer power is not only the most direct, but also the most effective



force that can be brought to bear upon the many difficulties that exist in the Lord's work. He who waits upon God moves on in quiet confidence and needs neither the blare of trumpets nor press-agent methods to announce his success, but in godly fear, leaves until the day of Christ's return the record of achievement." (1/17)

5. In prayer there is power to touch others.

Prayer does more than merely affect the person who prays. True, it does affect the one praying by drawing him or her closer to God, but prayer also reaches out to God on behalf of others, a practice generally referred to as intercessory prayer. O. Hallesby wrote, "Whenever we touch [God's] mighty arm, some of His omnipotence streams in upon us, into our souls and into our body. And not only that, but through us, it streams out to others. This power is so rich and so mobile that all we have to do when we pray is point to the persons or things to which we desire to have this power applied, and He, the Lord of this power, will direct the necessary power to the desired place at once." (2/63)

6. In prayer there is power to bring salvation to others.

Samuel Brengle once related, "Some of my prayers I have not yet seen answered, but others that I have poured forth with tears and strong desire for His glory and the salvation and sanctification of men 50 years ago are being answered before my eyes." (1/126)

This thought presents to us a unique fact about prayer. When offered for the unsaved, prayer has the patience to wait for decades before it releases its



power. Prayer offered on behalf of a grandson by an aging grandmother may be answered long after the grandmother has gone to heaven. In this sense our prayers are deathless. They outlast the pray-er. Even the great preacher Charles Spurgeon traced his conversion to prayer. Spurgeon testified, "I must not speak for you; but I may speak for myself. If there be anything I know, anything that I am quite assured of beyond all question, it is that praying breath is never spent in vain. If no other man here can say it, I dare to say it, and I know I can prove it. My own conversion is a result of prayer, long, affectionate, earnest, and importunate. Parents prayed for me; God heard their cries, and here I am to preach the Gospel. Since then I have ventured upon some things that were far beyond my capacity as I thought; but I have never failed because I have cast myself upon the Lord." (34/12,13) Even long after his parents were gone, Charles Spurgeon labored in the power of those earlier prayers.

7. In prayer there is power to bring the Holy Spirit into all our efforts.

The church today is waiting to witness the power of God manifested again as during the great revivals of centuries past. These past revivals teach us how vital prayer is in bringing the anointing of God's Spirit into our efforts. J. Wilbur Chapman reminds us of this in his description of the powerful Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards. Says Chapman, "I have been in that old church in New England where Jonathan Edwards preached his great sermon, 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.' He had a little manuscript which he held up so close to his face that they could not see his countenance. But as he went on and on, the people in the crowded church were tremendously moved. One man jumped to his feet and



cried for mercy. Other men caught hold of the backs of the pews lest they should slip into perdition. I have seen the old pillars around which they threw their arms, when they thought the Day of Judgment had dawned upon them. The power of that sermon is still felt in the United States today.” (1/35)

Chapman then shared the full story of this powerful sermon. For three days prior to that historic day, Edwards prayed, “Give me New England! Give me New England!” When the day arrived to preach, Edwards made his way into the pulpit with life-changing power. Some say it looked as if he had been gazing straight into the face of God. When he opened his lips to speak, conviction fell with an intensity seldom seen. The anointing of God’s Spirit on Edwards’ preaching that day came directly from the closet of prayer. It is an anointing that awaits believers of every generation, for any need or circumstance, who will sit with Christ in His School of Prayer and learn to appropriate this supernatural power.





CHAPTER 2

Lecture Hall Two

THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S PERSONAL LIFE

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Lecture Hall Two

STUDY HALL ONE

GOD'S PLAN: TO USE INDIVIDUALS

God uses people to carry out His plans, particularly people of prayer. This second primary focus of the *Change the World School of Prayer* concerns more specifically the person who prays. How one lives affects how one prays just as how one prays affects how one lives. And it is how one lives and prays that often determines how much that person will be used of God to have an eternal impact through their lives. It is, of course, a scriptural fact that God works through individuals. Will Houghton says, "God writes history in terms of human personality. The Book of Genesis gathers around eight men. The Bible presents epochs and eras, but at the center of each is a personality, and generally the man is the key to the age." (30/6) It is indeed true that man is the means by which God will accomplish His purpose on earth. St. Augustine adds, "Without God we cannot. Without us, God will not." (3/152)

This thought is aptly illustrated in the church services we attend. How does God reach a lost person in that service? Does He use a pew or the lights or the carpet? The atmosphere, of course, may help an unbeliever feel welcome, but God's way is to use people, like you or the preacher. Rarely does God use things; His plan centers on a person. This is why an entire Lecture



Hall in our School of Prayer must be devoted to the subject of the individual who wants to be used by God in prayer. Only as we grow spiritually can our prayers have the full effect God desires. Such growth might be better termed “self-development.” Following is a list of essential needs for strong spiritual growth and meaningful self-development.

1. The need for total surrender.

A most vital area of an improved self, in light of basic scriptural principles, is the aspect of total surrender. Leonard Ravenhill declares, “The difficulties to world evangelism are legion. But difficulties give way to determined men. The price is high. God does not want partnership with us, but ownership of us.” (15/27) M. Francois Coillard adds, “We must remember that it was not by interceding for the world in glory that Jesus saved it. He gave Himself. Our prayers for the evangelization of the world are but a bitter irony so long as we give only of our superfluity, and draw back before the sacrifice of ourselves.” (1/98) Here, then is the point of beginning in the matter of maturity. We must be like Jesus, and Jesus gave His all.

2. The need to accept God’s forgiveness.

Some Christians, unfortunately, have a poor self-image because they have not fully learned to accept God’s forgiveness. Hence, they constantly suffer spiritually because they do not feel worthy of coming before a Holy God in their present condition. An anonymous author once penned, “Saints are men who permit God’s forgiveness to come into them so fully that not only are their sins washed out, but also their very selves, their egos, and the root of their self-will.



And again, we see, the intensity of their power really to forgive is in exact proportion to the degree that they have permitted themselves to be forgiven..." (11/223)

Here we find another critical key to the development of self. It is essential we recognize that Christ died on the cross to forgive us completely from all sin. And this forgiveness is final. Jesus Himself declared, "It is finished." Only in accepting this fact can we fully grow and become mighty warriors of prayer.

3. The need for discipline.

Discipline, without question, is a major factor for proper self-development. The entire Christian life is but a life of obedience and discipline. True, there is freedom and excitement in serving the Lord, but let us not forget the other side of the proverbial coin—discipline and obedience. Hope MacDonald says of such discipline, "It is the only key that will open the door to a full and joyous life with Christ." (35/33)

Only as followers of Jesus immerse themselves in God's Word, and in particular the words of Jesus Christ on the subject of discipleship, can they fully comprehend the depth of spiritual development Christ desires for His children.

4. The need to care for our physical bodies.

There is little doubt we function best spiritually when we function best physically. Certainly we cannot give our full attention to specific needs for prayer when our mind is constantly focused on physical difficulties or pain in our body. Of course, God sometimes allows pain or suffering to lead His children to higher spiritual



ground. But in too many cases poor physical condition, especially late in life, is often brought on by mistreatment of our bodies earlier in life. Jesus even cautioned His disciples on this point. Speaking of the events that would someday lead to His future return to earth, Christ warns His disciples to refrain from “dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of this life” (Luke 21:34, NIV). The first warning on the list, that of dissipation, refers simply to self-indulgence or excess in areas like eating. Jesus spoke against this because He knew such excess would hinder the believer’s self-development in the area of good health, spiritually and physically.

5. The need to respect the management of our time.

History indicates that those who accomplish much for God learned well the wise use of time. They respected every minute as a special gift from God. Men like John Wesley and George Whitefield were very cautious concerning the use of time. Wesley, for example, began his day at 4 a.m. And just as punctually, the preacher retired each evening at 10 p.m. If guests were present at that time, Wesley would cut the proceedings short very courteously, saying, “Come, gentlemen! It is time for all good folks to be at home.” Wesley knew that if he failed to be cautious that evening, he would suffer much the following morning.

Perhaps the greatest mistake Christians make concerning the use of time is to spread themselves too thin. We must learn to focus our attention on that which is most essential to attaining our goals. A wise Quaker, Thomas Kelly, summed it up well, “We cannot die on every cross.” (11/203)



6. The need for a renewed mind.

We must never underestimate the power of “healthful thinking” in this matter of self-development. This subject involves the cautious guarding of what enters our mind. Even the New Testament word “repent” has the literal translation “to have another mind.”

Positive thinking produces strong personal growth, whereas negative thinking greatly hinders spiritual maturity. Norman Vincent Peale advises, “Every thoughtful person who has ever considered the matter realizes that the doctors are right when they tell us that resentment, hate, grudges, ill-will, jealousy, vindictiveness, are attitudes which produce ill-health. Have a fit of anger and experience for yourself that sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, that sense of stomach sickness. Chemical reactions in the body are set up by emotional outbursts that result in feelings of ill-health. Should these be continued either violently or in a simmering state over a period of time, the general condition of the body will deteriorate.” (11/213) It is, indeed, an interesting fact that it is because of chemical reactions within the body when one tells a lie that makes the polygraph test possible.

7. The need for a “right spirit.”

It is a puzzle, when looking at the natural side of things, to read in Scripture that God chose a man of 80 years to lead vast thousands of His people across a desert wilderness to a land of promise. Exactly why did God choose the aging Moses for this task? Perhaps the answer is explained in Numbers 12:3. Here it describes Moses as being “...a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth...”(NIV).



Moses was humble among others, and because of this God chose him for a place of great responsibility. Simply stated, he had a right spirit. In fact, page for page, more of the Bible was written by Moses than any other man, including Paul. It is not difficult to see why he was chosen. God could depend on him to listen and obey. A person with a “right spirit” always listens.

Daniel possessed this same inner attitude. Scripture tells us the prophet was elevated above all the kings and leaders of Babylon. Not only does the Bible reveal this fact but it states why he was given this promotion. One might think this occurred because Daniel prayed, but this is not the full explanation. The Bible says simply, “...this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him...” (Daniel 6:3, NKJV).

Self-development in all areas is essential if we are to be used of God. Those who do not seek to develop an “excellent spirit” can never fully grow into all the potential God may have for them.

8. The need for integrity.

William J. Krutza, in an article titled “Prayer Is Serious Business,” explains, “Getting through to God requires that we get past ourselves. Coming to God just as we are is the only attitude out of which God can develop us into what we should be. This requires an honesty of both mind and motive.” (28/61)

Here we find another important element in self-development. It involves integrity, or simple honesty. If we are to develop thoroughly as disciples of Christ, we must, as noted psychotherapist Frances G. Wickes suggests, “strip oneself of all self-deception, to see



oneself naked to one's own eyes before one can come to terms with the elements of one's self and know who one really is." (11/209)

9. The need for dying out to self.

William Parker and Elaine St. Johns in *Prayer Can Change Your Life* remind us of the story of Francesco de Pietro Bernardone, the fun-loving son of a wealthy merchant in the Italian city of Assisi. One day Francesco came upon a dying leper as he rode his horse along a dusty path. It was a dreadful experience as the young rider fastened his eyes upon the open sores of a neglected social outcast. This was, of course, a natural reaction. However, a sudden picture flashed before the healthy youth on horseback. It was a picture of himself as he knew Jesus actually saw him. Before the picture faded and reason could stop Francesco, he leaped from his horse and put all his gold into the leper's hand. Then he gently kissed the deformed hand. It was at that moment Francesco Bernardone died a spiritual death that later gave rise to the man we know so well as St. Francis of Assisi.

What exactly does it mean to die to self? Leonard Ravenhill answers, "The man who has died to self...has no ambitions—and has nothing to be jealous about. He has no reputation—and so has nothing to fight about. He has no possessions—and therefore, nothing to worry about. He has no rights—so therefore he cannot suffer any wrongs. He is already dead—so no one can kill him." (15/144)

Truly, only as we learn to die can we really learn to live, which is why dying to self is so essential in self-development.



10. The need to develop our capacity to love.

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, Henry Drummond preached a powerful sermon to a gathering of young missionaries. He chose as his scriptural foundation 1 Corinthians 13. Drummond powerfully declared, “In [early Church days] men were working their passage to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments, and the hundred and ten they had manufactured out of them. Christ said, ‘I will show you a more simple way. If you love, you will unconsciously fulfill the whole law.’”

Drummond used that message to emphasize the importance of developing our capacity to love. The inspiring preacher continues, “If man loved man, it would be preposterous to tell him not to kill. You could only insult him if you suggested that he should not steal. It would be superfluous to beg him not to bear false witness against his neighbor. If he loved him it would be the last thing he would do.”

Drummond went on to analyze what he called the nine ingredients of the spectrum of love. They included patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness, and sincerity. Then the writer concluded, “You will observe that all are in relation to men, in relation to life, in relation to the known today and the near tomorrow and not to the unknown eternity. We hear much of the love of God; Christ spoke much of love to man. We make a great deal of peace with heaven; Christ made much of peace on earth.” (11/106)

Dr. Carl Menninger in his book *Love Against Hate* (Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1942) wisely sums up the whole matter: “If we can love enough...this is the



touchstone. This is the key to the entire therapeutic program of the modern psychiatric hospital...love is the medicine for the sickness of the world.”



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall One



Lecture Hall Two

STUDY HALL TWO

DANGERS TO SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Though we have shared several important factors involving self-development, it is important we examine some of the dangers that lurk along this path to meaningful spiritual growth. We need to be alert to the various ways Satan may attempt to hinder our progress to mature in Christ, thus seriously limiting our power in prayer.

1. *The danger of fear.*

In discussing these first four dangers that hinder self-development, we refer specifically to the book, *Prayer Can Change Your Life*, by William R. Parker and Elaine St. Johns. (11/70) The authors explain that the first serious danger in developing proper attitudes, so as to provide prayer with real power, is the problem of fear. The authors conclude, “One of the first problems to be faced by each of us is fear. It is a well-known medical fact that fear reacts on the endocrine glands causing dysfunction of the whole system. Generally speaking, we are born with two fears: fear of falling and fear of loud noises. By the time we reach maturity we have accumulated dozens of fears: fear of the dark, fear of high places, fear of close places, fear of going to sleep, fear of snakes, spiders, water, fear of death and so on.” (11/71)



The authors go on to explain that fear is the motivating power behind all repressions and suppressions. There are guilty fears, the fear of being found out or exposed, or being humiliated, all of which are tremendously damaging. They conclude their discussion of fear, reminding us that fear drains the body of needed energy, often causing us to expend more energy than we replenish, and the cells of our body begin to suffer. This is precisely why much prayer and meditation in the Word of God must be amassed to conquer this serious danger to self-development.

2. *The danger of guilt.*

We come to a tremendous danger in the development of an individual's personality, as well as his or her attitudes, spiritually and emotionally. Of course, normal guilt should be welcomed when it comes in the form of conviction. As Parker and St. Johns explain, "If I lie, cheat, steal or do any number of conscious acts that make me feel guilty, this does not indicate a 'psychological quirk' that ought to be removed. This normal guilt should follow my wrongdoing. A mental pain is a warning, just as surely as a pain is in the body, telling us that all is not well within us. Normal guilt should cause us to adopt those new patterns needed for a healthy soul." (11/80)

All this might be summed up simply in saying *conviction cures, but guilt kills*. Exaggerated guilt truly can lead to devastating results. Parker and St. Johns cite the case study of a woman whose husband was an alcoholic. She developed a form of hysterical blindness when she took the guilt upon herself. This is, of course, an example of the extreme, though many people do suffer great anxiety over unresolved guilt. The fact is



Scripture plainly declares there is no condemnation (guilt) in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:1). Thus, if a Christian suffers from guilt, he generally brings it on himself. It is not God who points an accusing finger. There is no need to keep bringing up past sins to God in prayer. After all, God has forgotten these sins unconditionally (Hebrews 8:12). When a believer, having committed the same sin for the 20th or 30th time, comes to God and says, “God, I did it again,” God quietly answers, “Did what again?” He has forgotten, and (thank God), we are forgiven. True, we should confess each sin, but let us not worry about whether or not God might choose to forgive or not forgive those sins. Believe the Scriptures; those who confess their sins are forgiven (1 John 1:9).

3. The danger of inferiority.

Parker and St. Johns continue their evaluation of what they feel are the four greatest dangers in self-development highlighting the serious problem of inferiority. They declare, “There is no such thing as a ‘superiority complex.’ There is a self-centeredness and self-will. But what appears to be superior attitudes are likely to be a cover for inadequate feelings. It is common knowledge, verified by clinicians and therapists in mental hygiene, that we rate ourselves too low. Why? Partially because of disappointments and frustrations encountered in growing up. Many of us have been ridiculed, humiliated, berated somewhere along the line.” (11/83)

One can readily see how an inferiority complex can hinder self-development. If we continually convince ourselves we are nothing, it will be impossible for us to maintain the confidence needed to do the work God called us to do. Here is where prayer is so vital in



conquering these dangers. God tends to be far gentler in speaking to the heart of an individual than that person's fellow friends. Experience it for yourself the next time someone verbally attacks you. Get alone with God in quiet prayer and meditation and see if the voice of God does not soothe that attack. God has a way of making a person feel important. Only through much time spent alone with God can one gain the confidence necessary to conquer inferiority.

4. The danger of hate.

The authors cited above (Parker and St. Johns) conclude their discussion of the four most prominent hindrances to self-development by discussing what they label "misguided love." They explain, "Nothing deserves more thoughtful consideration in our evaluation of ourselves than our concept of love, either for oneself or another. The counterpart of love is hate. Strictly speaking, there are only three ways to feel toward another person. We can love them, hate them or be indifferent toward them. What hate and indifference do to us mentally, physically and spiritually is to keep us partially whole, sick or dying."

Here again we see the importance of God's Word and prayer as our chief solution. It is rare that one finds a consistent praying Christian who is a frequent criticizer. It is, indeed, almost impossible to find a follower of Jesus who demonstrates intense hostility.

5. The danger of an unforgiving spirit.

Earlier we spoke of the importance of a "right spirit" in self-development. Here we stress the opposite: that danger of bitterness and holding grudges. Jesus



said that if we want our prayers answered, we must willingly forgive others. He did not say it was a nice idea to forgive them. Instead, Jesus declared, “Whenever you stand praying, you must forgive anything that you are holding against anyone else, and your Heavenly Father will forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25, Phillips).

It is a well-established fact that a spirit of strife and bitterness is an inseparable barrier to answered prayer. Jane Emerson explains this poetically:

*I heard a knock I know, I said,
“Lord Jesus, do come in. Come in.”
He said, “The door is locked.”
It was...I turned the key.
I heard Him touch the handle.
And a crack of light appeared.
“Come in, Lord Jesus. Please come in.”
“Something is against the door,” He said,
“It will not move!”
I looked. I saw a dark, crude bundle
I had not known was there—an ugly bundle,
Hateful to the touch.
I glanced inside and saw the rancid unforgiveness
of a wrong.
I pushed it back, flung wide the door and light
poured in as Jesus stepped inside my house and greeted me.*

Bitterness and unkind thoughts often form the greatest barrier blocking the believer’s door to the blessings of God. In fact, unless our attitudes toward others are pure, absent of all resentment, it is doubtful God will listen to our praying.



6. The danger of retribution.

David Hubbard, in his book, *The Problem with Prayer Is*, spoke of this danger when he shared, “Life at best is sometimes a kind of friendly sparring, and at worst it becomes a knock-down, drag-out fight. Our natural tendency is to trade punch for punch. You snub me, and I ignore you. You blame me, and I’ll toss the blame right back at you. Toe to toe we stand and slug it out.” (4/74)

The danger of an unforgiving spirit closely resembles this final danger, that of seeking retribution. In fact, it seems that one flows from the other. This latter danger is to develop a spirit that says, “If it takes the rest of my life I will get you for this.”

No doubt the greatest problem in all of these hindrances to self-development involves the time consumed by each. This is especially true of seeking punishment or vengeance for some wrong. If one spends all his time calculating a plan of action for repaying a wrong, he hardly has time to work for God or focus on spiritual things. That is why we must increase our spiritual power to conquer these dangers by giving more time to prayer and a study of God’s Word.



Additional Insights



Lecture Hall Two

STUDY HALL THREE

THE POWER OF HOLY LIVING

A humorous story is told of a man who repeatedly prayed aloud during a weekly prayer service: “Oh Lord, fill me. Fill me with Thy Spirit.” Finally his disturbed spouse cried out, “Don’t do it, Lord, he leaks!”

Some believers hardly seem ready to be filled with all the blessings of a prayer-answering God. They could easily lose what God might give them because their spiritual vessel is weak. Indeed, there is little question God is looking for vessels into whom He might pour His presence, but too few are found. Meister Johannes Eckhart said it succinctly, “God is bound to act, to pour Himself into thee as soon as He shall find thee ready.” (11/220)

Here is a truth for every age. God is looking for someone He can use, someone He can set apart through whom the masses can be touched. And when it comes to prayer, God is looking for a very special people. We might define them, as did Isaiah, “The Holy people” (Isaiah 62:12). Unfortunately, as a wise evangelist preached, “Many people would like the privilege of prayer without purification of the soul.” (18/34)

It is this subject of soul-purification that deserves special attention in our School of Prayer. Prayer is really



only as powerful as the spiritual condition of the one who prays, or as Leonard Ravenhill wrote, “Prayer is conditioned by one thing alone and that is spirituality.” (15/1) With this in mind, let us examine several definitions of holy living.

1. Holy living is total separation from the world.

It is a sad and subtle argument that says followers of Jesus must live like the world in order to understand people who live in the world. Those adhering to this argument sometimes use the illustration of Jesus ministering to the publicans and sinners (Matthew 9:10-12) as an excuse to participate in worldly affairs. This is a misunderstanding of the ministry of our Lord. It is never necessary to live like the world in order to minister within the world. Consider Abraham in comparison to Lot. Lot lived where all the “action” was. (See Genesis 13:8-13.) And though Abraham lived a great distance away in the quiet country hills, he was the one chosen by God to pray the powerful prayers that saved Lot from certain destruction. Abraham had learned that living holy in the world means living separately from the world.

2. Holy living is putting off the old man.

F. J. Huegel explains, “The reason why many are finding prayer so unsatisfactory and the life of prayer so unattractive is because they have attempted to enter into the celestial realm of prayer in the strength of the ‘old man.’ The ‘old man’ can no more wield these weapons which ‘are not carnal but mighty through God,’ than he can ‘love his enemy,’ or ‘rejoice always,’ or ‘have the mind which was in Christ Jesus,’ or fulfill any other Christian grace.” (1/14)



In discussing this second definition of holy living, we must remember this “putting off” is our responsibility, not God’s. It is best summed up in the expression, “God does the forgiving when man does the repenting.” The latter requires action on our part. The Apostle Paul wrote, “...let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body and spirit...” (2 Corinthians 7:1, NLT). Note that Paul is telling believers they have a part in the holiness process.

3. Holy living is what we are when we are alone.

The wise saint Montaigne once suggested it is a rare life that remains well ordered in private. He added, “Any man can play his part in the side shows but to be disciplined within, in his own bosom, where all is permissible, where all is concealed, is the real point in holy living.” (28/51) We might add that holy living also involves how we spend our leisure time. It concerns what we think and do when no one else is watching. This is essential to living holy. Powerful is the thought attributed to Francis of Assisi, “What a man is before God, that he is and no more.”

4. Holy living is to be clean and ready for God’s use.

A 14th century German Friar, Johann Tauler, once suggested that “God wants only one thing in the whole world, the thing which He needs...that thing is to find the innermost part of the noble spirit of man clean and ready for Him to accomplish the divine purpose therein. He has all power in heaven and earth, but the power to do His work in man against man’s will He has not got.” (11/220)



We recall our premise at the outset of this chapter that God has chosen, for reasons generally unknown, to channel all His efforts through fallible human beings. In His sovereignty He has elected to give man choice to accept or reject His gift of salvation. Likewise, after one receives this eternal gift he continues to either advance God's work or hinder it by this same power of choice. He does this by how he lives.

5. Holy living is learning to call sin, sin.

A century ago a Scottish preacher said, "A man is in bondage to whatever he cannot part with that is less than himself." This is the man weighed down by weights and sins of a carnal life. Hope MacDonald elaborates, "Nothing destroys more than sin. Sin destroys our fellowship with God and our relationships with others. Sin blinds us to the truth of God's Word." The author went on to describe a sad encounter with another Christian woman. The lady was a Sunday school teacher and was respected by all. During the conversation the teacher began to share that she was having an extramarital affair with the choir director. In the midst of the conversation the confused woman blurted out, "But, Hope, this isn't some cheap affair you read about. This is different—why, our love is from God!" (35/66)

Here is a prime example of distorted thinking concerning sin. Holy living requires a proper label for sin, recognizing it for what it is—uncleanness that separates a person from God. Without holy living our prayers have little, if any power. Yet, we rejoice that it is in prayer that we can confess those very sins in order that God might deliver us from them. In this sense, the sinner is always welcome in the closet of prayer.



6. Holy living is loyalty to the King.

In *The Positive Power of Prayer*, by E. M. Blaiklock, a meaningful truth is shared regarding holy living. Blaiklock declares, “We cannot limit the triumph of God to social evil in the world at large, to the corruption of the government, to the arrogance of godless nations, the calamitous insolence of dominant minorities, to the sins of caste, and the faults of society. We can pray about all these things, but only after we have faced the question of our own absolute allegiance to the rule of God in our own lives. It is idle to pray for the triumph of God, if we are living at peace with evil. It is scarcely honest to ask for the coming of the kingdom for others, if we frustrate God where we are personally able to bring the prayer to pass.” (14/30)

All questions on holy living sooner or later boil down to loyalties. Are we loyal to the King? Prayer is only a prevailing power in the Christian who has learned the importance of absolute loyalty to the King—Jesus Christ.

7. Holy living is to hate sin.

There seems to come a time in the lives of truly committed believers when they become obsessed with a hatred for sin. A parent would be considered psychologically unfit if, upon finding his daughter’s body cold from the bite of a poisonous spider, he were to neglect his daughter and instead pick up the spider and caress it. Rather, he would crush the spider with an intense hatred because it hurt something he loved dearly.

Sin hurts our Lord dearly and it separates us from Him. We must never love it, never give it a place in our hearts. Thankfully, to rid ourselves of it we need only confess it. Thus, holy living means to develop a conscious



hatred for sin. The Psalmist admonished, “You who love the Lord, hate evil!” (Psalm 97:10, NKJV).

8. Holy living is to grow in Christ's perfection.

One of the more troubling expressions in the church today consists of two words: “Nobody’s perfect!” It is a statement some use to excuse their unholy conduct. These have not learned to grow in Christ’s perfection.

The word perfection is, of course, easily misunderstood. Christ did say, “...you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48, NLT). Perhaps Olive Wyon’s definition comes close to the true intent of the biblical meaning of perfection: “It does not mean an impossible purity or blamelessness, but rather the idea of ‘completion.’ In other words, we are meant to go on to maturity. Holiness is simply ‘the flowering of Christian growth and development.’” (26/147)

To Charles Finney perfection meant a perfect trust and consecration to Jesus Christ, a trust that could enable a Christian to live without “known sin.” By this, Finney did not mean total freedom from the physical and mental appetites or from making mistakes. It is, of course, unfortunate that Finney lived to see some of his convictions carried to great extremes by misguided followers who became legalistic. He denounced such as those whom “having begun in the spirit...try to become perfect in the flesh.” His original concept of perfection, however, meant that believers were to grow unto perfection in the perfection of Jesus. To suggest this is impossible is to disagree with the Apostle Paul’s optimistic declaration, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NKJV).



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall Three



Lecture Hall Two

STUDY HALL FOUR

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

It is not uncommon to hear the expression, “I need all the help I can get!” Followers of Christ certainly need all the help available if they are to fulfill the Great Commission as well as reach new heights spiritually. Because of this need it is essential that we highlight the importance of our walk in the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit and why is this third person of the Trinity so important to self-development? The English word describing the Holy Spirit, as used in John 16, is Comforter (or Helper). It means a supporter. The people of Christ’s day were accustomed to the Greek word used by Christ, *paraclete*, as meaning one who went into the courtroom when a person was to appear before a tribunal. He stood by the accuser’s side, giving him counsel and advocating his cause. This *paraclete* also helped the person keep a clear head and answer all questions wisely.

One can never underestimate the need for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit flowing through those who desire to be used of God. Charles Spurgeon powerfully preached, “We shall grow cold, unholy, and worldly; there will be no conversions, there will be diminutions, there will be divisions, there will be mischief of all kinds; Satan will rejoice, and Christ will be



dishonored, unless we obtain a larger measure of the Holy Spirit.” (34/54)

In light of church history one thing is clear: God’s spiritual giants urged other believers to be “full of the Holy Ghost.” Samuel Chadwick emphasized, “Go back! Back to that upper room; back to your knees; back to searching of heart and habit, thought and life; back to pleading, praying, waiting till the Spirit of the Lord floods the soul with light, and you are endued with power from on High.” (5/103)

Andrew Murray also felt the need for a right relationship with the Holy Spirit and reminded others of it. He wrote, “In every prayer the triune God takes a part—the Father who hears; the Son in whose Name we pray; the Spirit who prays for us and in us. How important it is we should be in right relationship to the Holy Spirit and understand His Word!” (35/45)

This was exactly the relationship that D. L. Moody sought and found. Moody’s powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit changed him from an ordinary preacher to one of the finest evangelists of his time. It was shortly after the great Chicago fire, which left Moody in great inner turmoil, that the evangelist went to New York City to raise money to replace his church, which had been lost in the fire. God used this time to deal with Moody concerning his need for true spiritual power. Of this experience the preacher later confided, “My heart was not in the work of begging. I could not appeal. I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day in the city of New York—oh, what a day!—I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name.” (8/88)



Whatever it was that happened to D. L. Moody became a touchstone of his ministry. Though the content of his sermons was the same, as Moody himself later related, the results were extraordinary. Explaining why he gave little detail of this experience, Moody reminded inquirers that Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for 14 years. The evangelist would only say that God revealed Himself in such a way that he had to beg God to “stay His hand” lest his physical body might die as the result of God’s manifest presence.

Finney had a similar experience, which he, too, had difficulty describing. The lawyer-turned-evangelist could only explain, “The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.” (8/77)

Leonard Ravenhill, too, speaks of the need to experience this same “Holy Ghost power” if we really wish to impact our world. Ravenhill writes, “Some Christians cannot say when they were saved. But I never knew a man yet who was baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire and was unable to say when it happened. Such Spirit-filled men shake nations for God, like Wesley who was born of the Spirit and lived and walked in the Spirit. An automobile will never move until it has ignition—fire; so some men are neither moved nor moving because they have everything except fire.” (15/111)



Students of Christ's School of Prayer who do not understand this power, and the compassion for lost people produced through it, would do well to lock themselves in a closet of prayer and wait before the Lord until the fire is ignited. Finney, Chadwick, Moody and Murray spoke of this experience. This, alone, will consume one with a powerful baptism of Holy Spirit fire and a resulting supernatural concern for lost souls.





CHAPTER 3

Lecture Hall Three

THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S PRAYER LIFE

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Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL ONE

PRINCIPLES OF THE PRAYER LIFE

We have been taught that prayer brings power into our lives because prayer is power. No Christian is greater spiritually than his or her prayer life. If this is true, and we believe it is, the prayer life of a follower of Jesus could well be the most important aspect of that person's life. For this reason our prayer school will consider several foundational principles that provide a basic overview of a practical prayer life, beginning with what might seem to be the obvious.

1. We must recognize the need for a prayer life.

It may seem unusual to begin with so simple a thought, but it is a fact that too many Christians simply do not recognize the need for a daily prayer time. So, we begin by stressing that prayer must become serious business to the believer. Spurgeon preached, "There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anyhow, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to read a prayer book and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the prayer book up again." (34/3)

This, then, presents us with a basic question: "Do I actually have a prayer life?" If my answers are



“Sometimes,” “I’m not sure” or “No,” it might be that I simply am not convinced of the importance of prayer in my life. Until this attitude changes, establishing an effective life of prayer is impossible.

2. We must acknowledge the all-inclusive fact—God answers prayer!

It requires little insight to conclude that a person who doubts that God answers prayer will probably give little time to prayer. Spurgeon bluntly reminds us, “We ought not to tolerate for a minute the ghastly and grievous thought that God will not answer prayer. His nature, as manifested in Christ Jesus, demands it.” (34/10)

Unfortunately, there will always be some who consider answers to prayer a mere coincidence. Archbishop Temple had a good response for such critics: “When I pray, coincidences happen. When I do not, they don’t. So, I’ll keep praying and see all these coincidences keep happening.”

Another important truth Christians must learn concerning this reality is that answered prayer is a law of God. John Bisagno in *The Power of Positive Praying* speaks of this scriptural law. He reminds us that in turning the temperature down to 32 degrees, ice will form as a result of a scientific phenomenon. We are not at all surprised that this happens as it is a scientific law in operation. Scientists do not say, “Let’s make a proposition. Lower the temperature to 32 degrees, and I’ll promise you, as a reward, some ice.” He simply says there will be ice. It is not a bargain or promise, as Bisagno points out; it is a law. The same thing happens when we pray. The author concludes, “What we call Bible



promises are actually not promises at all, they are laws; immutable, unchanging laws.” (33/11)

3. We must understand the theology of prayer.

It might be more accurate to suggest that we “try” to understand the theology of prayer. The prayer warrior certainly does not have to be a theologian to pray. On the other hand, he should understand basic theological principles that will help him become more effective in his prayer life. For example, it is important to recognize that prayer brings us into unique fellowship with the members of the Godhead. As one writer wisely suggests, “You are praying in the Name of Jesus. You are praying through the Holy Spirit.” (9/26)

To understand prayer, then, we must know and understand the nature and character of God. A humorous story shared by a young mother illustrates this thought. She discovered her little boy carefully drawing a picture and inquired about the subject of the drawing. “Oh, that’s a picture of God,” the boy replied. “But nobody knows what God looks like,” the mother protested. “Well, they will now!” came the child’s innocent reply.

Few Christians are as bold as this young boy, at least in attitude, when it comes to understanding God. A clear understanding of God’s nature, however, is vital to prayer. There are those, for example, who have great difficulty praying because they feel prayer rarely brings results. They ask, “How can finite man possibly tell an infinite God how to run His universe?” Ralph Herring offers this answer: “Prayer is that which makes it possible for God to seemingly at least change His mind without being inconsistent. It is His favorite method of reigning in



difficult and distressing situations. Only a sovereign God can inspire prayer and only a sovereign God can answer it. A man's concept of God, therefore, determines the depth of his prayer life. Real prayer begins and ends with God enthroned." (16/16)

An especially vital aspect of the theology of prayer concerns the place God's Son occupies. Scripture declares Christ to be "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." (I Timothy 6:13-15, NKJV). If we do not understand this, we cannot understand prayer. Later in this chapter we will look more closely at the importance of the Name of Jesus in prayer.

In order to understand the theology of prayer, we do not need a lengthy list of theological facts tacked to the wall of our prayer closet or tucked neatly in our Bibles. As our prayer life develops, these aspects will become natural to our praying. Sir Arthur Eddington reminds us of the vast array of scientific phenomena that begin to function together as a person contemplates the simple act of stepping through a doorway. While one can never fully understand all that is involved, Eddington explains it would be unreasonable to wait until the matter is fully understood before stepping through the doorway. This same principle is true concerning the matter of prayer. Only as we spend time in prayer will we better understand prayer itself.

4. We must learn how to minister this wonderful gift of prayer.

Years ago the inspiring pen of Rosalind Rinker produced a masterpiece on the subject of prayer—*Prayer: Conversing With God*. It was recently honored by *Christianity Today* magazine as one of the 100 most



influential Christian books published in the past century. Author Rinker reminds us that it is all too common for Christians to pray for the conversion of a loved one for years and not receive an answer. The author concludes it is “not because God isn’t willing to save the loved one, it’s because we are not praying sensibly and with faith. It is like trying to take one giant leap from the bottom of the stairs to the top of the stairs. We want to get to the top of the stairs. We talk and talk about going and yet there we stand. The reason being, it is impossible to get there from the bottom to the top of a flight of stairs in one step. Stairs were made to be used, but they were made to be used one step at a time!” (38/81,82)

Indeed, there is much to be learned concerning the prayer life and we must climb these steps one at a time. Only in this manner can we effectively learn to minister the gift of prayer.

5. We must recognize the true purposes of prayer.

All true prayer should have three major goals or purposes. First, it should glorify God. Second, it should bring the one who prays closer to God in fellowship. Third, it should focus on a great ingathering of souls.

Concerning the first goal, Donald Demaray says, “The purpose of prayer is not intended to give one a life of ease, but to glorify God.” (26/128) Demaray goes on to cite the Psalmist’s words, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth” (Psalm 115:1, NKJV).

The second goal simply centers in fellowship with God. Though there may be many purposes for prayer, bringing glory to God and fellowshiping with Him



are the most essential. Concerning the latter, we are reminded of the mother who heard her son's demanding prayers and advised, "Son, don't bother to give God instructions, just report for duty." The fiery evangelist Leonard Ravenhill concluded, "Much of our praying is but giving God advice! Our praying is discolored with ambition, either for ourselves or for our denomination. Perish the thought! Our goal must be God alone." (1/116)

The third goal of true prayer centers in the multitudes waiting to be evangelized. When Christ said, "So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields," our Master had His mind on world evangelism. (See Matthew 9:38, NLT.) On another occasion Jesus cautioned, "Do you think the work of harvesting will not begin until the summer ends four months from now? Look around you! Vast fields are ripening all around us and are ready now for the harvest" (John 4:35, NLT). To "look around" at the fields implies "prayerful contemplation" of the urgency of the hour in relationship to the need. The harvest is the essence of that need. A vital purpose of prayer, then, is the ingathering of souls—the Lord's harvest!



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL TWO

JESUS AND PRAYER

Earlier we spoke briefly of Christ's importance in relationship to prayer. Due to the vital place God's Son occupies in prayer, we devote time to examining the prayer life of Christ, His chief prayers, and the power of His Name in our praying.

The Example of Christ's Prayer Life

When examining the life of Jesus Christ one thing is obvious: our Lord saw the necessity of prayer. Christ prayed at His baptism, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the garden and even on the cross. When His disciples were ready to face their greatest spiritual test Jesus cautioned, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matthew 26:41, NIV). Regarding the prayer life of Jesus in Scripture, David and Kimberly Butts, in their insightful book, *How to Pray Like the King*, provide this sample list from the New International Version:

- "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" (Mark 1:35).
- "After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray" (Mark 6:46).



- “At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure’ ” (Matthew 11:25-26).
- “Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them” (Matthew 19:13).
- “They went to a place called Gethsemane...Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will’ ” (Mark 14:32a, 35-36).
- “About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).
- “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him” (Luke 3:21-22).
- “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16).
- “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles” (Luke 6:12-13).



- “Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?” (Luke 9:18).
- “About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray” (Luke 9:28).
- “So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:41-42).
- “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission” (Hebrews 5:7).
- “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Indeed, in all that Jesus did we see a saturation of prayer. E. M. Bounds penned, “Prayer was the secret of His power, the law of His life, the inspiration of His toil...His joy, His communion and strength. To Christ Jesus prayer occupied no secondary place, but was exacting and paramount, a necessity, a life, the satisfying of a restless yearning, and a preparation for heavy responsibilities.” (20) No doubt the essence of all Christ’s praying is summed up in His words. “For I always do those things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29, NLT).



The Example of Christ's Prayers

Though numerous prayers of Christ can be found in the New Testament, two in particular seem most significant. One is the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, commonly referred to as "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13). The second, the true prayer of our Lord, was prayed just prior to His ascension (John 17). Let us look first at the prayer Christ taught His disciples, traditionally labeled "The Lord's Prayer."

The Lord's Prayer is, without a doubt, a sound biblical pattern for meaningful prayer. Of this prayer Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "Jesus gathered together the things with which they [the Jews of Christ's time] were most familiar and placed them in such perfect relation to each other so as to reveal as never before the whole plane of prayer. To pray that prayer intelligently is to have nothing else to pray for. It may be broken up, each petition may be taken separately and expressed in other ways, but in itself it is inclusive and exhaustive." (31/66) Morgan goes on to explain how the Jewish rabbis taught what were known as "index prayers." These consisted of a collection of brief sentences, each suggesting a subject for prayer. Taking just such an index prayer, the praying person would recite one petition at a time, carefully elaborating on each point of the prayer. In this sense The Lord's Prayer is an "index prayer." As Morgan concludes, "There can be no desire of the human heart which is inspired of the Holy Spirit, no petition presented to the throne of the Father but that it is included in this prayer." (31/66)

A more careful, though brief study of this important "model prayer," point by point, should help the student of prayer understand this excellent pattern for



prayer. (We use here the text from the New King James Version of Scripture for our overview.)

Our Father in heaven

Here Jesus describes the relationship between the believer and his heavenly Father. The expression “Father” speaks of a warm, personal relationship. The prayer does not begin with “Oh God” or “My God.” It centers in a relationship between a loving Father and a grateful child. Further, we note the important use of the word “our” that begins the entire prayer. To use the word “our” not only shows possession but fellowship. It is both an ownership and a relationship word. From the very outset of the prayer we are reminded that all God has is ours; not mine alone, but ours collectively. (See Romans 8:16-17.) None of us is an only child. There is a vital “fellowship of all believers” and this prayer taught by our Lord introduces this concept not at the end of the prayer, or even in the middle, but in the very first word.

Then, too, in this first phrase we discover something of the nature of God in prayer. Because God is in heaven, He is above all. This brief two-word statement of the prayer—“in heaven”—reminds us of God’s omnipotence (total power), omniscience (ability to know all things), omnipresence (the ability to be everywhere present) and total holiness.

Hallowed be your name

To declare, “Hallowed be your name,” is to acknowledge, “I recognize You, God, as being completely holy.” This is the highest statement of praise we could offer God. Therefore, this second aspect of the prayer is to recognize God for all He is at the start of our praying.



This is worship at its highest level. It is to state that God's name and all He represents is above all else in the universe. It is a declaration of reverence, which is an acknowledgment of our fear of the Lord—not a panicked anxiety filled with fright but a deep awe that we have been given the privilege of coming directly into God's very presence.

Your kingdom come

Jesus was careful to place God's ultimate kingdom intentions, which clearly includes world evangelization, in the first two primary petitions in this pattern for prayer. Surely it is impossible for the kingdom of God to come to earth if we have not fulfilled Christ's command to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth and disciple the nations (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). Thus, each time we pray this prayer we are reminded of some 225 nations in the world where millions of people speaking thousands of languages and dialects wait to receive their first introduction to Jesus Christ. The word "kingdom" refers to the scope of a sovereign's reign. It concerns rulership and authority. When we pray for nations and people groups we are declaring that God's kingdom is ultimately going to reign in these settings as the Good News of Jesus comes into them and these peoples are transformed.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

As we approach this segment in our pattern-prayer we focus on God's will in our praying. In this regard, world evangelism once again enters the picture because God wills that all be saved (2 Peter 3:9). No prayer can be answered out of God's will and no petition can be refused when offered in God's will (1 John 5:14).



The key to all effective praying, then, would be to seek out God's will. This can be accomplished only by much time spent in God's presence as well as in His Word since it is in prayer as well as from the Scriptures that we discover God's will.

Give us this day our daily bread

Thus far our pattern-prayer has centered on worship, the declaring of the will of God, including praying for world evangelism, and a recognition of all God is and has for us. Now our Lord gets down to life's necessities. We have needs that arise *daily* and Jesus taught His disciples the importance of daily "systematic prayer" in order for the believer to present these needs. We must never feel we are "begging" just because we ask God for specific needs. Asking is simply God's way of meeting these needs. Charles Spurgeon explained, "Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom. If you may have everything by asking in His name and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is." Indeed, what we need today, we should request today. It is interesting that the original Greek intent of the words in this part of the prayer suggest, "Give us today our bread for today."

Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors

It is at this juncture in Christ's prayer that all improper attitudes must be resolved. The subject of this specific phrase is forgiveness. We can go no further in our praying if we harbor grudges, resentments, and bitter thoughts toward others. The key word here is "forgive." Jesus is saying we can only expect forgiveness of our failures in God's eyes, if we are willing to forgive those who have failed us in our eyes.



Do not lead us into temptation

Here we are asking for victory over the many temptations of the enemy that come our way daily. Recognizing there are temptations is the first step in overcoming them. This petition puts us on guard. Of course, the wording of this part of the prayer is not to suggest that it is God who is responsible for our many temptations, but that He would help us overcome them as we encounter them this particular day. Paul reminds us that as we are tempted, God will “keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it” (1 Corinthians 10:13b, NLT).

Deliver us from the evil one.

The previous petition follows immediately with the request, “But deliver us from the evil one.” Here the praying believer is reminded of the constant spiritual warfare we face. Most of our praying sooner or later will focus in a confrontation with the forces of Satan. But before we enter such warfare we gather strength with this petition. Here the believer asks for power over Satan himself. The rendering should be, “Save us from the evil one.” It is clearly a petition for deliverance, as well as a request for protection. Every prayer time should remind us to be alert to the schemes Satan may bring against us as we go about our activities of the day. And when we come to this warfare phase of prayer we would do well to recall (and apply) Paul’s insights on the armor we need to effectively wage this warfare. (See Ephesians 6:10-18.)



For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Our “model prayer” now concludes with a beautiful doxology that takes us back to where we began—praise and worship. We are again acknowledging that God is the source of all our blessings and He has all the power we need and He deserves all the glory. It is His kingdom and we are simply privileged to be a part of it. So we make that reality a part of these final moments of our praying. We entered our time of prayer through the door of praise and now we exit through that same door. Every prayer ought to begin in praise and end in praise, because exalting God is the foundation to effective praying. Were it not for an extraordinary God who answers prayer, true prayer would be impossible. So, coming full circle we conclude where we started with another moment of worship.

Amen!

There is, however, a final word in this prayer that is generally overlooked. It seems but a casual footnote to our praying. It’s almost like the expression “good bye” when we leave the presence of a friend. But the word “amen” is not a “good bye” to God because, after all, He’s going with us anyway! “Amen” actually is to express our confidence that God will honor our petitions just prayed. “Amen” means, “May it be so.” It’s a word of both confirmation and completion. To add “amen” to one’s prayer is like a judge striking his desk with a gavel, proclaiming, “It is done.” Uniquely, “Amen” is also a name given to Jesus in Scripture. (See Revelation 3:14.) In this sense we are ending our prayer with a bold declaration that in Christ we have confidence that our prayers have been heard and answers are on the way. Amen!



Christ's Longest Prayer

The second significant prayer Christ prayed is recorded in John 17. It also is His longest recorded prayer. This prayer was offered primarily for His disciples, including those alive at that time and those who would believe in Him down through the centuries. Note the major aspects of this important prayer from the New King James Version of Scripture:

First, Jesus asked that His disciples might be one (John 17:11).

As this meaningful prayer unfolds we hear Christ's plea, "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours" (John 17:9). Later our Lord asks specifically "that they may be one, as We are" (John 17:11).

In this vital prayer we see the importance of all Christ's followers coming together in unity of purpose. This is especially essential in the work of world evangelism because the task of reaching every person on earth with the Gospel simply is not possible without unity. (In using the word unity we do not mean total agreement in all aspects of doctrinal interpretation. Rather, we speak of a spirit of cooperation that comes from basic agreement that Christ is our Lord and in Christ we will work together.) Clearly no individual denomination (or mission society) could ever accomplish the total task of evangelizing the entire world on its own. It is statistically impossible given the immensity of the task and the availability of workers for any one group. Knowing this, Jesus entreated His Father for special unity among believers. We also know Christ clearly linked unity to world evangelization because in His prayer He



asked His Father that His disciples would be “made perfect in one, that the world may know that You have sent me...”(John 17:23).

Second, Jesus prayed that His disciples might have His joy in themselves (John 17:13).

Christ knew that His joy, alone, would give His followers strength for the task. Without the joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10), there will be no strength. This is why Jesus offered this request early in His petition. We, too, should follow our Lord’s example and ask for God’s joy as we pray. We should not only ask for joy in our own lives, but for joy among all Christ’s disciples as well.

Third, Jesus prayed that His Father would keep His disciples from evil (John 17:15).

Jesus knew His disciples would be under constant attack of the enemy. To be sure, He did not ask that God would provide His disciples an easy path to personal glory, but He did invoke God’s protection for them as they carried out the task of carrying His Gospel to all the world.

Christians must remember that Satan is a formidable foe. But we must also remember we have already defeated Satan through the Name of Jesus. Indeed, the prayer Christ prayed centuries ago is being answered for us today. We must simply join with Christ in echoing this petition on behalf of disciples everywhere who may be struggling in their spiritual lives.



Fourth, Jesus prayed that His disciples would be sanctified (John 17:17).

Holy living, as highlighted in our previous lecture hall, now becomes a part of Christ's prayer as He prays. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Sanctification means to set apart something for use by God. It also refers to a separation from things of the world. The desire of Christ was for His disciples to become pure and blameless before God. Later in His prayer Jesus adds, "That they may be made perfect..." (John 17:23).

Fifth, Christ prayed that His disciples would have eternal life (John 17:24).

We note that Christ's prayer included these moving words: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory..." (John 17:24). Here we recognize the longing Christ had to be with His disciples. He looked forward to eternal fellowship with them. It is a petition that has been answered for untold thousands of Christ's disciples in ages past. All who have died in Christ have seen this prayer answered. They are with Him now!

But the real purpose of this entire prayer seems best summed up in verse 23. Consider again these words: "That the world may know that You sent me" (John 17:23). It seems the whole prayer was focused on those who would someday be saved. It was a harvest prayer. Jesus also knew that for His disciples to accomplish this task of world evangelization they would need holiness, unity, power and joy. All was for the purpose of advancing His kingdom. The Apostle John would one day sum up the ultimate answer to this prayer



prophetically when he recorded this event from the future: “Then the seventh angel sounded [his trumpet]: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15, NKJV).

The Power of Christ’s Name

An entire volume easily could be written on the power of Jesus’ Name in prayer with plenty of notes left over. (I did attempt to do just this in a book co-authored with Jack Hayford entitled *31 Days Meditating on the Majesty of Jesus*, Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.) But since our School of Prayer seeks to provide at least a basic overview of prayer, several important thoughts ought to be included regarding praying in Jesus’ Name.

1. To pray in the Name of Jesus is to pray with the mind of Christ.

Someone has said, “The Christian prays in the Name of Jesus. Among other things, this means we cannot expect God to honor any petition that is not in keeping with the mind and spirit of Christ. God will do nothing that is contrary to His nature, and His nature has been clearly revealed in Christ.” (28/20) To pray with the mind of Christ, the praying believer must think like Christ. This can only be done as we abide in Him through prayer and a study of God’s Word, particularly Christ’s teachings in the Gospels.



2. To pray in the Name of Jesus is the key to releasing God's power.

Note these numerous New Testament references on this subject: “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do...” (John 14:13). “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14). “You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, he may give you” (John 15:16). “...whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23).

It is clear as we study Scripture that Jesus' Name is the key to God's power. Only as we learn to pray in His Name can we really tap the power and resources of God. Spurgeon says it thus, “He who pleads well knows the secret of prevailing with God, especially if he pleads the blood of Jesus, for that unlocks the treasury of heaven. Many keys fit many locks, but the master key is the blood and the Name of Him that died but rose again, and ever lives in heaven to save unto the uttermost.” (34/50)

3. To pray in the Name of Jesus is the Christian's power of attorney.

Power of attorney provides one the legal and written authority to transact business on behalf of another. To pray in Jesus' Name means we have the right to use His Name in transacting His spiritual business. Said another way, it is asking Jesus to stand up and speak on behalf of our praying, serving as an advocate who sponsors our petitions as they arrive at the courts of heaven. Seven times in the Gospels Jesus gives us this legal right. We would do well to exercise this privilege often.



Dwight L. Moody's gifted coworker, Bible teacher R. A. Torrey, shares a moving story that well illustrates the use of Jesus' Name. During the Civil War there was a father and mother in Ohio who had an only son they loved dearly. Not long after the outbreak of the war he informed his parents that he had enlisted in the army. Of course, the young man's parents were sad to see their son leave home, though they loved their country and felt his services were needed. According to Torrey, after the son left for the front lines of battle he wrote home on a regular basis, sharing with his parents many exciting experiences. His letters were always full of good cheer. Then one day the letters ceased to arrive. Days passed, and still there were no letters. Weeks passed, and the parents began to fear the worst.

Finally a letter came bearing the insignia of the United States Government. In it the parents were told of a great battle in which many had been killed. Their son had been numbered among the dead.

For days and weeks the parents mourned. The years slowly passed. The war came to an end. Only fading memories lingered. Then, a strange thing happened. One morning as they were sitting at the breakfast table the maid brought word that a poor, ragged man was at the door looking for the head of the house. She tried to turn him away but then he handed her a note, written in the handwriting of their deceased son. When the father opened the crumbled page he read, "Dear Father and Mother: I have been shot and have only a short time to live, and I am writing you this last farewell. As I write, there is kneeling beside me my most intimate friend in our company, and when the war is over he will bring you this note, and when he does be kind to him for Charley's sake. Signed, your son, Charles."



Evangelist Torrey concludes the account, “There was nothing in that house too good for that poor tramp... and there is nothing in heaven or on earth too good, or too great, for you and me in Jesus’ Name.” (6/111)

4. To pray in the Name of Jesus is an attitude of the heart, not merely an expression.

There will always be some Christians who seek an easy path to power with God. They seem to conclude that God owes them something rather than admitting they owe God everything. William McBirnie wrote, “God owes me nothing. I deserve nothing from Him. I have no claims on Him. Therefore, not all my crying or earnestness will prevail unless I offer prayer in Jesus’ Name.”

Concerning this matter of Christians looking for magical formulas for success, McBirnie concludes, “Praying in Jesus’ Name is not a mechanical password which, if used faithfully, guarantees automatic acceptance of all prayer. Instead, it should come from a deeply felt sense of our own unworthiness and Christ’s worthiness. God will answer a prayer for Jesus’ sake when He will not answer it for our sake.”

Our attitude, or motive, then, is the real issue in praying in the Name of Jesus. To arbitrarily end a prayer with a quick expression, “In Jesus’ Name, Amen,” is a far cry from truly praying in the nature and character of Who Jesus is. The latter involves a total trust and confidence in Jesus to do exactly what He has promised to do in His Word. It is to live a Jesus-saturated life and pray Jesus-saturated prayers.



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL THREE

PRINCIPLES OF PETITION

There are several major areas of prayer that deserve special attention in this School of Prayer. These major categories include petition, intercession and praise. Petition involves asking God for personal needs. Intercession concerns prayer that invokes God's blessings on behalf of others. Praise, of course, concerns the giving of our love to God in worship and adoration. Concerning these major areas of the prayer warrior's prayer life, we look first at petition. (An entire Lecture Hall later will be devoted to praise.)

1. Petition is God's special prayer gift.

St. Teresa of Avila once testified, "You pay God a compliment by asking great things of Him." We recall that Jesus felt petition was of such importance that it was included in the prayer He taught His disciples. "Give us" was one of the key requests in His prayer. Petition is so important, in fact, that it is really an insult to God to neglect this gift. We all know the feeling of working hard to obtain a gift for someone, only to have it misused, forgotten, or even rejected completely. Imagine how God feels when we fail to use this precious gift of petition.



2. *Petition need not be complicated.*

Rosalind Rinker reminds us of Eugenia Price's dramatic conversion, as related in Price's book, *The Burden is Light*. Miss Price prayed only two words repeatedly, "Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!" They were simple words but they were enough to bring about Eugenia Price's conversion. Rosalind Rinker explains that it is not the actual words we pray, but the condition of our hearts when we pray that brings the answer. (38/66) Thus, petition need not be cluttered with fancy words. In most cases it is simply a heart crying out to God in desperation that brings answers.

3. *Petition may be repeated.*

Though some praying may be absent of words, there are times the opposite is true. Scholars tell us the words in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask," "Seek" and "Knock" are all in a Greek tense that implies continuity. It is called the "linear tense" and strongly suggests this rendering: "Keep on asking...keep on seeking...keep on knocking, for those who keep on asking receive, and those who keep on seeking find, and those who keep on knocking will find doors opened for them."

It is, of course, true that Jesus chided the Pharisees for what He called "vain repetition." (See Matthew 6:7, NKJV). Vain comes from the Latin word *vanus* meaning empty. Webster defines vain as "having no real value." Jesus was not speaking of just any kind of repetition but of empty repetition. At no time did He say we cannot repeat a petition. He was merely addressing the "worthless" praying that the Pharisees offered primarily for show. Indeed, even Jesus Himself repeated a prayer. Note these words describing His praying in the



garden the night before He went to the cross: “So He left them [His disciples], went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words” (Matthew 26:44, NKJV).

4. Petition should be offered in total honesty.

As William Parker and Elaine St. Johns began their in-depth research into prayer’s therapeutic value they quickly came to this decision: “The first actual step we took in prayer therapy was to make prayer a practice in honesty.” (11/62)

To accomplish this during our times of prayer we must tell God precisely what is troubling us. There is no need trying to hide our feelings from God. He knows our thoughts before we even think them. Thus, the real importance of honesty concerns its effect on us rather than God. In this regard petition has tremendous therapeutic value.

5. Petition must not be our only form of prayer.

Asking, though a vital part of prayer, is by no means the entire scope of prayer. This caution is needed because too many Christians spend the majority of their prayer time seeking God for personal needs. Even our prayer times with others too often become sessions in “corporate worry” as prayer strategist Steve Hawthorn suggests in describing how much of our times in prayer together concentrate solely on discussing our personal problems. Such praying can foster a spirit of selfishness, smothering the fires of generosity. We should not be afraid to ask God for things when praying, but may we never allow petition to become our only form of prayer.



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL FOUR

PRINCIPLES OF INTERCESSION

Intercessory prayer is that aspect of prayer that invokes God's blessings on behalf of others. Praying Christians can hardly imagine the power awaiting release through this form of prayer. It was the dying disciple, Stephen, who offered just such a prayer before a crowd of people who took his life, one breath at a time, through the cruel torture of stoning (Acts 7:54-60). Stephen's last words included a fervent cry to God for mercy upon his murderers. And consider this. In the shadow of the crowd stood the very instigator of that murder. He, too, became an object of Stephen's prayer. He was Saul of Tarsus, a notorious Jewish persecutor of those who followed Jesus. But mark the fact that a dying man, Stephen, prayed a simple prayer of intercession and all the world has felt the impact of that prayer. Who would believe the man who led that mob in murder, Saul of Tarsus, would one day write, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1, NKJV)? This is the power of intercessory prayer, an aspect of prayer that deserves special attention. Consider the following:



1. Intercession is love on its knees.

A wise author reminds us that prayer for others should be the “basic burden of our prayer life because love is the law of life for Christians.” Prayer for others, he says, is one of our best ways of loving. (4/32)

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale went so far as saying this love manifests itself in supernatural vibrations. The noted pastor relates, “Personally I believe that prayer is a sending out of vibrations from one person to another and to God. The entire universe is in vibration. There are vibrations in the molecules of a table. The air is filled with vibrations. The reaction between human beings is also made up of vibrations. When you send out a prayer for another person, you employ the force inherent in a spiritual universe. You transport from yourself to the other person a sense of love, helpfulness, support—a sympathetic, powerful understanding—and in this process you awaken vibrations in the universe through which God brings to pass the good objectives prayed for.” (13/89)

Intercessory prayer, then, is going into the prayer closet with a spirit of love and applying that love to our prayers. Simply stated, prayer is love on its knees.

2. Intercession prepares lost souls for salvation.

For reasons beyond our mental grasp, it would seem God has voluntarily made Himself dependent upon our prayers. This is particularly true of how God seems to rely on intercessory prayer to prepare the unsaved for salvation. Andrew Murray said, “God’s intense longing to bless seems in some sense to be graciously limited by His dependence on intercession...”



God regards intercession as the highest expression of His people's readiness to receive and to yield themselves wholly to the working of His almighty power." This 19th century missionary concludes, "God rules the world and His Church through the prayers of His people. That God should have made the extension of His Kingdom to such a large extent dependent on the faithfulness of His people and prayer is a stupendous mystery and yet an absolute certainty." (13/118,119)

3. Intercession is the heart's cry for souls.

Intercession is the highest form of prayer since it deals with that priceless commodity, the soul of a man. In this sense intercession is the very cry of the heart for new converts. This also involves the subject of "burden" in our prayer. J. D. Drysdale emphasizes, "A burden is a load of care or sorrow. The most important work of the child of God is intercession. No one will ever be a winner of souls unless he has the burden of souls. When this burden is honest we do not merely think about souls but we cry to God on their behalf." (1/100)

The reason intercessory prayer is so vital is that it centers on the lost. Petition, though important, usually concerns things. Intercession, however, focuses on people, and people are priceless.

4. Intercession involves working together with God.

Intercessory prayer, as a wise warrior explains, does not center in standing before God with outstretched hands hoping to receive something. It is to stand beside God, working with Him, in the task of redeeming others. (28/21) To intercede for others is to be joined with Christ in carrying forth His plan for world



evangelism. Paul reminds us, “We are laborers together with God” (I Corinthians 3:9, KJV). Intercessory prayer, then, is not a task Christians carry out by themselves but a work of love accomplished through God’s strength, in the authority of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why intercessory prayer is so powerful.

The Power of Supplication

There is a special form of prayer that might come under either major category of petition or intercession. It is called “supplication.” Of this type of prayer James writes, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16, NKJV). The word “prayer” here is more accurately rendered “supplication” in the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament. The thought here is that this form of prayer—supplication—really works, or “avails much in its workings.” Thus, God’s intercessors who truly desire effective results in prayer (prayers that really work) must take a closer look at what the Bible describes as supplication.

Supplication is the type of prayer that possesses a sense of urgency. One commentary suggests that supplication involves a fleeing to God for protection. (43/115) In ancient times a supplicant would flee to the altar of prayer with an olive branch in his hand; the branch being a generally accepted emblem of peace. This would suggest that supplication involves a deep concern or burden for which inner peace is desperately sought. In this sense supplication involves a sense of urgency. R. A. Torrey explained that supplication “sets forth prayer as the definite expression of a deeply felt need.” (6/28)



Jesus clearly understood the meaning of supplication, for we observe this kind of prayer offered by Christ on more than one occasion. The author of Hebrews describes how our Lord “in the days of His flesh...offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death...” (Hebrews 5:7, NKJV). The strong crying and tears mentioned here are definitely linked to the word “supplication.” Tears, of course, are often an outward indication of inward desperation. (More will be said about tears and compassion later in our study.)



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL FIVE

PRINCIPLES OF

CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

There are several aspects of prayer that directly involve the spiritual growth of a prayer warrior. These might come under the heading of “growth prayer.” Not only does the believer’s prayer affect those for whom prayer is offered, but such praying greatly affects the person who prays. In other words, the prayer warrior finds a meaningful side benefit in praying; he or she grows inwardly as prayer flows outwardly. This is something we alluded to in Lecture Hall Two but we highlight it again here.

The first focus to be discussed in this regard concerns “conversational prayer.” Conversational prayer, of course, is often thought of in terms of small gatherings where various persons pray “conversationally” for each other’s needs. Here we wish to highlight conversational prayer as being something also meaningful to our personal praying. Following are several helpful hints about conversational prayer for the individual prayer warrior.



1. In conversational prayer we share secrets with God.

We have already suggested that prayer ought to be a practice in honesty. This is especially true of conversational prayer. Prayer should be as unconscious as our communication is with each other. The more intimate we become with a person, the more open and honest we are with that person. Of course, when one really gets to know a person, he or she will readily share his or her secrets with that person. This is exactly what should transpire through conversational prayer.

2. In conversational prayer we should speak in a relaxed language.

It is not necessary in prayer to impress God with fancy oratory. We should worry less about words and more about attitudes. Remember, God knows every word of every language. Fancy clichés that might impress a group could never impress an all-knowing God. It is rather surprising how remarkably different some believer's prayer voices are to their conversational voices.

Rosalind Rinker, who has written much on this subject, described a group of typical praying people as they first encountered conversational prayer. She explains, "The first thing we noticed was that unconsciously we were dropping some of the familiar prayer language. Especially the beautiful old Quaker forms of Thee, Thou, and Thy, together with the King James English, with its didst, dost, wouldst, hadst, walketh, sinneth and so on." (38/21)



3. In conversational prayer we should learn to listen.

It is unfortunate that too much prayer, especially in group settings, usually centers in a “speech” made to the Lord. Conversational prayer will correct this problem since a conversation, to be meaningful, is always twofold. Not only do we speak, but we listen. (To cover this subject more adequately we will devote more time to listening later in our study.)

4. In conversational prayer we should speak as an intimate friend to an intimate friend.

“The highest order of prayer,” suggests E. W. Kenyon, “is a love affair: two lovers meeting, sharing with each other. Not slaves and the master; neither servants and an overlord; but a Father and His children. The highest order of prayer is a dialogue: you and He conversing about His work.” (9/188)

Conversational prayer, then, is a dialogue between two persons who care much for each other. Dialogue comes from the Greek *dialogues* meaning “to converse.” Such dialogue should be natural, as natural as two friends discussing an experience. It should be intimate, as intimate as two people in love. This is the essence of conversational prayer.



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL SIX WORD PRAYING

Because of the need for this thorough understanding of what makes our praying more powerful, it is imperative that a portion of our study be devoted to the subject of God's Word in relationship to our praying. Without the Word, our prayer has no foundation. Kenyon explains, "All the mighty achievements wrought by men of God have been accomplished by faith in the written Word." Kenyon adds, "Real prayer is taking His Word into the Throne Room and letting His words speak through your lips to Him on the throne, calling his attention to His own promises." (9/135,136) We would call this form of growth prayer "Word praying," because we actually implement God's Word into what we pray.

The more we study great laborers for God of centuries past, the clearer it becomes that much time was spent by them in the Word of God. Noted China missionary J. Hudson Taylor once told his son he had just finished reading his Bible through for the 40th time, a project that had taken him 40 years. Little wonder Taylor had made such a lasting impression on God's work in China. To further strengthen our own prayer lives, consider these reasons why God's Word is so vital to effective prayer:



1. God's Word is vital in prayer because in it God Himself is speaking.

The Bible is more than a collection of fancy sayings for a few religious fanatics. Scripture contains the very words of God. E. W. Kenyon preaches, "You can lean on the Word as you would lean on Him [God]. You can rest in the Word as you would rest in Him. You can act on the Word as you would act if He had just spoken to you. The Word is always now." (9/42)

In a sense God, Himself, becomes a part of our prayer when we use His Word while praying. To bring God's Word into prayer is to bring God into our praying.

2. God's Word is vital in prayer because the Bible is alive.

When God is in something it will be alive because God is alive. A Chinese Christian said of this subject, "We must not come to the Bible only to learn and to understand. The Bible is not the tree of knowledge; it is the tree of life! All Christians know that the function of the Word of God is to reveal God to us. Although this is true, this is not its main function. The main function of the Bible is to impart God into us as life and as the nourishment of life. It is not only to give us knowledge about God and His love, but to impart God Himself into us." In the Word we find life. Thus, to add God's Word to our praying adds life to our prayers.

3. God's Word is vital in prayer because it reveals God's nature and power.

Earlier we shared that understanding God's nature is a cardinal principle of effective prayer. Only



as we know God's nature can we know His will, which is essential to successful prayer. Here is why God's Word is so vital to prayer. In God's Word we discover the nature and power of God. There is absolutely no limit to the ability of God as unveiled in His Word. This is why we need a thorough understanding of God's Word if we wish to pray with power.

4. God's Word is vital in prayer because it builds faith.

God's Word is the parent to all faith. "...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Paul wrote to Roman believers (Romans 10:17, NKJV). Later in Hebrews we read, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3, NKJV).

When God spoke, creation responded. He simply said, "Let there be light," and light appeared. Thus, God and His Word are one. To live in the Word of God is to live in the faith of God. Faith, then, comes by familiarity with God's Word.

5. God's Word is vital in prayer because it teaches us so much about prayer.

The entire Bible declares God's willingness to answer man's prayers. In a sense, it is the greatest book ever written on this subject. E. M. Bounds declares, "The whole canon of Bible teaching is to illustrate the great truth that God hears and answers prayer." (20) Even a casual reading of Scripture reveals how much of this unique Book is comprised of man's communion with God. Thus, to learn about prayer our key source must be God's Word, the Bible.



6. God's Word is vital in prayer because it prepares the prayer warrior for effective service.

The problem with much praying today is that the human vessel is too seldom prepared for so challenging a ministry. To be truly effective prayer warriors, we must spend more time in preparing our hearts for prayer, which is best done through time spent in God's Word even before we pray. Spurgeon preached, "In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled; but in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit; even as a child comes not to his father in the morning until he has washed his face." (34/34)

This remarkable London preacher went on to explain, "See yonder priest: he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hand, but when he rises he washes his feet at the brazen laver, he puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments; then he comes to the altar with his sacrifice properly divided according to the law, and is careful to do according to the command, and he taketh the blood in a bowl and poureth it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar." (34/35) Like the priest's careful preparation prior to offering his sacrifice, the person of prayer needs to prepare for prayer. Such preparation is best achieved by quiet moments in God's Word.



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL SEVEN

LISTENING IN PRAYER

An ancient tribe of American Indians had this thought-provoking proverb: “Listen, or thy tongue will keep thee deaf.” Earlier we suggested that too many believers spend too much time talking in prayer and not enough time listening. Pamela Gray said, “For one soul that exclaims, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,’ there are 10 that say, ‘Hear Lord, for thy servant speaketh!’”

Because listening is little understood in this matter of prayer, we take time here to evaluate several facts about this vital aspect of prayer.

1. Listening is the quietening of the soul before God in prayer.

“Right prayer,” someone has said, “demands a quietening of the whole being.” Rosalind Rinker suggests that it is in silent moments, between our prayers, that God speaks to us, and in this silent communication with our Heavenly Father we are changed. Rinker elaborates, “We are not there primarily to ‘get things’ but to realize God’s presence.” (38/93) Jo Kimmel in her book, *Steps to Prayer Power*, adds, “In listening prayer we must learn to quiet our bodies and our minds and put ourselves in a receptive attitude, an attitude of waiting, of listening.” (17/80)



2. Listening is a time of release from the world.

Many prayer warriors are not aware of the importance of relaxing in prayer. They begin prayer at a rapid pace and continue unloading their problems verbally on God with scarcely a moment to enjoy His presence. Listening helps conquer this problem in prayer; it gives one a release from the pressures of the day. To strengthen this time of listening we should practice relaxing as we begin to pray. John Bisagno even suggests that prior to communicating with God we take a few deep breaths to help quiet our mind and relax our body. (33/43)

3. Listening in prayer is a School of Silence.

Like our School of Prayer there also is a “School of Silence.” To understand it we must enroll in a course of listening. Surely, one will never learn the secrets of another if he or she refuses to listen to that person. Leonard Ravenhill recalls, “John the Baptist’s training was in God’s university of silence. God takes all His great men there.” (15/106) Even the Apostle Paul enrolled in this university. Though dramatically converted on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-6), Paul still required three years alone in Arabia to meet quietly with God (Galatians 1:17-18). It is here Paul most likely experienced numerous revelations from God that are central to his writings.

I recall a story told of a steamship company that was seeking a telegraph operator. Interested applicants were notified to report for a job interview on a specific day. Numerous persons arrived at the stated time and soon the waiting room was alive with conversation. So involved in idle talk were the candidates that only one heard a soft series of dots and dashes coming over a



loudspeaker hanging in a corner of the room. Suddenly the man jumped to his feet and bounded through an office door. Later he walked from the office with a smile of fortune. He had received the job.

Other applicants were quite surprised, some even complaining they had arrived at the office long before that excited man. Soon the details of his hiring were revealed and they saw the reason for this strange happening. While they were busy in conversation, this quiet individual had heard a message in Morse Code over the office loudspeaker. The owner of the steamship company had sent a message into the waiting room saying the first man who reported to a particular office would receive the job. Because the man was listening he was hired.

Listeners in prayer are the ones who ultimately tap God's power. Only as we listen can we learn. J. R. Miller explains: "Quietness in a man or a woman is a mark of strength. Noise is not eloquence. Loudness is not power. In all departments of life it is the quiet forces that affect most. Therefore, if we would be strong, we must learn to be quiet. A quiet heart will give a quiet life." (1/81)

4. Listening is heart communication.

Because we give ourselves to listening in prayer need not mean we have ceased to communicate with God. It is possible to communicate in total silence. The account of Wordsworth and Coleridge spending a delightful evening sitting by a warm fire illustrates this thought. Hours passed without a single word being shared by the two friends. Finally the evening was over, and one of the men softly declared, "It has been a great evening!"



Wordsworth and Coleridge had learned the power of silence in communication. An absence of words need not mean an absence of communication. Indeed, heart communion may well be one of the highest levels of communion. It involves the spirit of man communicating in silence with the Spirit of God. Listening allows the prayer warrior's heart to reach out to God. Silence is the power that makes this reach possible.

5. Listening is the better half of conversation.

John Anthony Hanne suggests that in conversing with an expert, the expert should do most of the talking. He explains, "I know nothing about cars except where to put in the gas, oil, water, and air and roughly what happens when I use the controls. The mechanism beneath the hood is a complete mystery to me. If one day I were to meet the designer of my car, and we had a conversation about the car, I doubt whether I could make any useful contribution to the conversation other than to ask questions, which could well be naive ones, and to interrupt at intervals to seek clarification of what I did not understand. Otherwise, all I could usefully do would be to listen and learn." (36/33,34)

Since God knows everything there is to know we should never do all the talking in prayer. As the above author suggests, we should only interrupt periodically at intervals for clarification on major points in question. Only in this way will we really begin to comprehend all God desires to do through our praying.



6. Listening is the key to creative prayer.

There is a unique aspect of listening in prayer that deserves special attention. It might be labeled creative prayer. It is prayer in which God reveals tangible ideas or creative thoughts to the listener. King David experienced creative prayer when God gave him the pattern for the temple in ancient times. David said, "...the Lord made me understand in writing, by *His* hand upon me, all the works of these plans" (1 Chronicles 28:19, NKJV). To David, God's instructions were very specific, and because he was listening, David was able to write them down.

There are times in the life of each Christian when he or she needs very specific instructions for given situations. God instructed Jeremiah to call on Him during such times and He would respond with "specifics" that were previously not known (Jeremiah 33:3). It is during these times of "creative prayer" that we learn the very secrets of God. But in order to receive these creative instructions we must learn to listen.



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL EIGHT

MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION

Meditation became popularized in the 1970s and 80s because of renewed interest in Eastern religions and related exercises like Transcendental Meditation. Some still are committed followers of such practices. Unfortunately, this emphasis caused some Christians to reject a meaningful evaluation of the power of true biblical meditation. Because such meditation can be vital to personal prayer, we give it special attention here.

What exactly is meditation? One author answers with an illustration. Suppose we decide to plan a special trip. First, we secure brochures explaining our destination. We then acquire a map to discover the best route to that destination. Even before our departure we begin to think about the activities that this vacation will involve. After much reading we might sit back and quietly evaluate our plans. In essence, this is “meditation.” (3/59)

Spiritually speaking, meditation is to prayerfully evaluate a matter or passage of Scripture, thoroughly absorbing whatever message may be in the object of our meditation. It might even be expressed as evaluating any matter in reference to God.



What is the best object for sound meditation? Scripture answers this question. The Psalmist explains, “My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him” (Psalm 62:5, NKJV). Especially note the expression “for God alone.” All meditation should have the ultimate goal of glorifying God. Pure meditation is to “enjoy God with our thinking.”

We are also instructed to think on God’s Word. The Living Bible suggests that a person is continually happy who is “always meditating on His (God’s) laws and thinking about ways to follow Him more closely” (Psalm 1:1-2, The Living Bible). Daily meditation is even linked to success and prosperity (Joshua 1:8, NKJV).

Another object of sound meditation is God’s mighty works. The Psalmist declares, “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands” (Psalm 143:5, NKJV). This opens up a vast realm for meditation. God’s mighty works include everything from glimmering stars to singing birds, grassy hillsides and flowing waterfalls. Nothing beautiful is outside the realm of God’s creation so nothing beautiful is eliminated as an object of meditation, provided we do this in reference to God and do not become worshipers of the objects themselves.

There is another object for meditation that many praying people overlook. The Psalmist said he would “remember the days of old” (Psalm 143:5). This includes looking back at those times when God has blessed us and meditating on these experiences. Closely related to meditation is that aspect of prayer called contemplation. Whereas meditation means to reflect, ponder or consider, contemplation is to regard a matter thoughtfully. We might say contemplation is probing a



matter carefully in the mind. Both contemplation and meditation are only possible if we take time to be alone with the Lord. Here, as in other areas of prayer, listening is essential.



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL NINE

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

A person's prayer life is obviously only as strong as that person's faith is in God. Because faith is essential to the only kind of prayer God answers—believing prayer—we will examine numerous facts about faith, including several “faith-killers” that often drain faith of its power.

1. Faith is the forerunner to all answered prayer.

Prior to the quadrennial Olympic Games, when nations of the world gather for athletic competition, a torch is carried by various athletes from Greece, where the games began, to the current country hosting the events. The torch becomes a forerunner for what is to come. In regard to prayer, faith is that torch that must go before every petition. In *The Necessity of Prayer*, E. M. Bounds explains, “Before prayer ever starts toward God, before its petition is accepted, before its requests are made known—faith must have gone on ahead; must have asserted its belief in the existence of God; must have given its assent to the gracious truth that ‘God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek His face.’” (21) Indeed, without faith it is not only impossible to please God, it is impossible even to approach God (Hebrews 11:6).



2. Faith essentially is trusting God.

Corrie ten Boom labels faith a “fantastic adventure in trusting Him.” To this a wise preacher adds, “Trust always operates in the present tense. Hope looks forward to the future. Trust looks to the present. Hope expects. Trust possesses. Trust receives what prayer acquires.” (21)

Webster defines faith as “trust in the honesty and truth of another.” This is what the prayer of faith involves. We must believe God is honest in His promises and will therefore bring them to pass. Faith is present-tense confidence.

3. Faith is a readily available power source.

John Bisagno explains, “Don’t get the idea that if you can only muster more faith, you will be effective in prayer. Faith is not some mysterious commodity to be sought after. You do not need more faith: you need to learn to appropriate the faith you already have.” (33/16)

As amazing as it seems, every one on earth has the power to believe in God. No one is incapable of believing, for all have faith resident in them, waiting to be tapped. Further, they have just enough faith to bring them to God. Paul told the Romans, “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3, NKJV). If we take this literally it would seem to suggest that every person has exactly the right amount of faith for any circumstance; all that an individual has to do is draw on it.

In this regard, Hope MacDonald reminds us that faith is very much like electricity. It is always there, waiting to be used. But until we plug into the source, for



all practical purposes there is no power at all. Faith is the power waiting to be tapped.

4. Faith is stepping out in advance of an answer.

Simply stated, faith comes by a willingness to act on God's Word with total abandonment. Peter provides a powerful example. He was willing to act on the single word of Jesus: "Come" (Matthew 14:29, NKJV). It was only one word, but when Peter obeyed he was able to walk on water. Think of it this way: when Peter walked on water, he was walking on a single word from Jesus!

Essential to faith is our willingness to step out in advance of an answer. John Bisagno shares a touching story that illustrates this. His five-year-old daughter came to him one day requesting a dollhouse. According to Pastor Bisagno, "I promised to build one and went back to reading an engrossing book. Soon I glanced out of the study window and saw my daughter with her arms filled with dishes, toys, and dolls, making her pilgrimage to the corner of the yard, where by now she had gathered a great pile of playthings. I asked my wife what the purpose of that impossible pile could be. 'Oh, you promised her a dollhouse,' she replied, 'and she believes you. She's just getting ready for it.'" It is not hard to imagine how quickly the father went to the task of building that dollhouse. Says the author, "I threw the book aside, raced to the lumberyard for supplies, and quickly built the little girl a dollhouse." (33/24)

God is waiting for a faith that launches out even when no answer is in view. William McBirnie says, "When we pray for rain we should get our umbrellas ready! When we pray for God's power, we should get ready to



act. When we pray for loved ones outside of Christ, we should expect them to come to Christ.”

5. Faith is to expect a miracle.

Any time God answers prayer a miracle takes place. Thus, to believe God answers prayer is to believe in miracles. Miracles are essential to faith and faith is essential to miracles. True faith always expects miracles. Evangelist Kenyon suggests, “The instant that you say there are no miracles in this dispensation, you deny that our walk is a walk of faith, and you declare that our walk is a walk of reason.” The preacher concludes, “I challenge you to find one place where God tells us as believers to walk by reason. God is a faith God. We are a faith family. We are all born by faith. We live by faith. By faith we live, breathe and have our being in Christ. If there are no miracles, then there is no reason for faith.” (9/30)

6. Faith is increased by God’s Word and prayer.

We have previously suggested that God’s Word is vital to powerful praying. It is especially vital because His Word produces faith, and faith provides power for prayer. (See Romans 10:17, NKJV.) Prayer, faith and the Word are directly related. They strengthen one another. Concerning prayer’s ability to increase our faith, a wise writer says, “You can’t sit with the God of all faith and all love, for one half hour each day, without unconsciously breathing in the faith of God.” Indeed, the disciples not only prayed, “Teach us to pray,” they also asked, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5, NIV). Virginia Whitman suggests, “Faith is the bucket of power lowered by the rope of prayer into the well of God’s abundance.” She explains, “What we bring up depends upon what we let down. We have every encouragement to use a big bucket.” (7/39)



7. Faith is the realm of power beyond the wilderness of reason.

Satan has many avenues to successfully attack our reason, provided we let him. However, when faith takes over the throne of our reason, Satan has no power. Kenyon declared, “Faith will lead you where reason cannot walk. Reason has never been a mountain climber.” (9/23,24)

8. Faith is learning to ask largely.

A person who has learned to pray the “prayers of faith” has learned to depend much on God and ask much of God. A soldier in Alexander the Great’s army greatly pleased the ruler and was informed he could ask any sum of money of the king. When he brought his request, however, the demand was such that Alexander’s treasurer refused to pay it. When Alexander was finally consulted, he is said to have replied, “He knows how great Alexander is, and he has asked as from a king; let him have what he requests.”

The prayer warrior must never be afraid to pray great prayers. No individual could possibly think of a prayer so vast that God, in answering it, would have any difficulty whatsoever. We must develop a habit of thinking big things when we pray. One writer suggests we learn to use words that cause our spirits to react as conquerors. Conquerors think in terms of conquering nations and continents, not a village here and a town there.

G. Campbell Morgan related a story that well illustrates the act of asking largely. During America’s Great Depression of the 1930s, soup was being



administered and special instructions had been issued that those coming to receive soup should bring no more than a two-quart vessel. As the man in charge was organizing the efforts of the kitchen he saw a boy about 10 years old, ragged and dirty, come into the soup kitchen with a vessel easily capable of holding three gallons. He was prepared to ask largely.

When it comes to prayer, the measure of assistance one receives is only limited by the size of the cup he holds before God. A friend of mine once had a unique dream that further illustrates this. She was taken to heaven and given a special guided tour by Jesus Himself. At one point they came upon a large door marked “Unclaimed” and she asked the Lord what was behind it. The Lord simply replied, “Come, I’ll show you.” Once inside she saw everything imaginable. There were not only material things like cars and houses but shelf after shelf with containers marked with words like “new heart,” “healed marriage,” “joy,” “strength to go on,” and a multitude of other items. “What is all this?” my friend asked. “Oh, these are all prayers of faith waiting to be answered,” Jesus replied.

Whether this unusual dream fits with your personal theology of prayer or not, one thing is clear from Scripture: “You do not have, because you do not ask” (James 4:2b, NIV). Note also Christ’s words, “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Matthew 21:22, NKJV).



9. Faith is a bold confidence in God.

From the dawn of creation man was made to be a confident creature. The authors of *Prayer Can Change Your Life* remind us that God's children do not crawl on the face of the earth! They walk upright and have been given dominion. Concerning this dominion these authors exclaim, "Then let us dare to take it, to fulfill His purpose by exercising this dominion over ourselves, over our environment, but let us be humble." (11/105)

We need to apply this audacity to our praying if we truly desire results. The Bible says we are to approach God's throne boldly or confidently with our requests (Hebrews 4:16). We are to come, as earlier suggested, expecting a miracle. David Hubbard suggests, "There is no merit in timidity where prayer is involved. Timidity and reverence are not synonymous. Some of the finest saints in the Bible prayed with boldness, almost brashness." (4/31)

Deadly Faith Killers

If faith is the key that taps God's power, Satan is surely well aware of this reality and will do all in his power to lessen or even deaden its impact. To this end prayer's enemy has devised several deadly "faith-killers." A look at these should help us prepare a thoughtful counterattack when the enemy approaches.

1. The first deadly "faith-killer" is man's reason.

Reason basically means "an explanation of an act" or "good sense" in a matter. Reason kills faith because it demands that everything be carefully explained. Reason wants all the answers. Reason demands that



an experience be logical. It will readily take the place of God's Word if we let it, for the Word doesn't appeal to the senses. I recall one of the first passages of Scripture I memorized as a newly converted youth: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV). Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*, uniquely begins this passage, "Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own." Reason, without God, tries to figure out everything on its own. Such reasoning, if misguided, can destroy our faith.

2. A second deadly "faith-killer" is the too-often-used expression, "I hope everything just works itself out."

If prayer is to be filled with power we must rid the expression "I hope this happens" from our prayer vocabulary. True, hope is important to the Christian because it looks ahead to future rewards and blessings. But hope has no real part in present-tense prayer. We must never declare, "I hope God does this or that." Hope is not faith. Hope is tomorrow, faith is today. Don't allow the "I sure hope it works out" to rob you of the faith needed to work out your situation. The enemy would far rather see us hoping than believing.

3. A third "faith-killer" is man's senses.

It is always easy to believe in things we can see with our eyes. Thomas would not believe Jesus was who He claimed to be until he saw the nail prints. Only then would Thomas say, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28, NKJV). But what was Christ's response? He said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (v. 29).



Our Lord was making it clear that faith has nothing to do with “sense knowledge.” Sense knowledge involves knowledge that is acquired through the use of our senses. To believe in Christ using the Thomas procedure, a person would need either to physically touch Jesus, see Him, smell Him, taste Him or literally hear Him. There would be no faith or trust whatsoever in this form of experience.

4. Another deadly “faith-killer” is negative praying.

Why are we surprised that when we confess sickness, sickness results? Indeed, if we confess poverty, poverty may well come our way. The fact is, negative praying often produces negative results. When we continually confess failure, we might just as well expect failure. We might change the expression “What you see is what you get” to “What you say is what you get.”

5. A fifth serious “faith-killer” is doubt.

Revivalist Leonard Ravenhill reminds us: “Doubt delays and often destroys faith. Faith destroys doubt. The blessed Book does not say, ‘If thou canst explain the Scriptures, all things are possible to him that explaineth.’ God being who He is will never be explained in time; nor, we think, will He try in eternity to explain either Himself or His ways. The Book, which is as immutable as its Author, says, ‘If thou canst believe, ALL (that unavoidable word again) things are possible to him that believeth.’” (15/62)

Doubt is deadly to faith because it questions God’s promises. One will never find anywhere in Scripture a single passage where God promises to answer doubt-filled prayers. Doubt, to be sure, is deadly.



6. The final “faith-killer” on this abbreviated list is that troublesome word “if.”

This word is clearly one of the weakest words in the English vocabulary. Like the word “hope” mentioned above, when used in contrast to real faith, “if” should be removed from our prayer vocabulary. Too often we drain prayer of much of its faith when we say, “If it be your will.” Certainly we want the will of God accomplished through our praying. But this expression never should be used to provide us a way out if our prayers aren’t answered. We should seek to determine in advance of offering a petition, with the help of Scripture, whether that request is in line with God’s will. In this way we can pray in total faith. (The final Lecture Hall in our study, chapter seven, will be given to this matter of divine guidance, including keys for determining God’s will through our praying.)



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL TEN TRAVAILING AND PREVAILING: COMPASSION AND TEARS IN PRAYER

Compassion is a prerequisite for effective praying. As Jack McAlister, founder of Every Home for Christ, often preached, “You’ll find Christ’s autobiography in six words: ‘I have compassion on the multitude’” (Mark 8:2, KJV). Matthew said of Jesus, “He was moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36, NKJV). John Smith, the outstanding Wesleyan preacher of a former generation, expressed this compassion when he testified, “I am a brokenhearted man, not for myself, but on account of others: my God has given me such a sight of the value of precious souls that I cannot live if souls are not saved. Oh, give me souls, or else I die.” (32/115)

Compassion is that inward motivation to outwardly touch someone in need. Compassion is derived from two Latin words *com*, meaning “together,” and *pati*, meaning “to suffer.” These thoughts combined suggest “to suffer together.” Of compassion, Bible teacher J. H. Jowett says, “I do not know how any Christian service is to be fruitful if the servant is not primarily baptized in the spirit of a suffering compassion. We can never heal the needs we do not feel. Tearless hearts can never be the heralds of compassion. We must pity if we would redeem. We must bleed if we would be the ministers of the saving blood.” (1/88)



This inward compassion often produces tears. Stanley Banks explains, “Heaven is not moved by oratory, but it will be moved by soul agony and tears.” Indeed, one can never underestimate the power of brokenness before the Lord. It is unfortunate that much of our praying is devoid of a deep-felt compassion. This is especially regrettable since nothing seems to hold more power in touching God than a broken spirit. As Charles Spurgeon shared, “Nothing is so eloquent with the father as his child’s cry; yes, there is one thing more mighty still, and that is a moan—when the child is so sick that it is past crying, and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness. Who can resist that moan?” (34/41)

In this same sermon Spurgeon described the Apostle John in Revelation who saw a book (scroll) in the right hand of God who sat on His throne—a book sealed with seven seals and no one was found worthy of opening that book or even to look upon it. The powerful preacher then asked his congregation, “What did John do?” Spurgeon quickly answered, “The book was by-and-by opened by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open the book; but it is written first before the book was opened, ‘I wept much.’ Yes, and the tears of John which were his liquid prayers, were, as far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded Book was opened.” (34/14)

Here Spurgeon provides us with an excellent definition of tears. They are “liquid prayers” that flow as a river of compassion to the very heart of God.

Sadly, not all praying Christians have learned the value of these liquid prayers. Some even confess a conviction that tears are a sign of weakness. G. Campbell



Morgan cautions us on this matter: “When the Spirit revealing the will of God for the world creates in the heart a great pain and a great discontent, do not let us check it. That is what Christian men and women, alas, are so constantly doing. That is to grieve the Spirit indeed. We ought to be ready to bring the new sensitiveness of our Christian life into close touch with the world’s agony until we feel its pain as our very own.” (31/59-60)

Whatever Happened to Travail?

When speaking of compassion we referred to prayer that sometimes manifests itself in groans. Such praying seems almost lost in many parts of Christ’s Body today. It is a form of praying that well might come under the category of “travail.” What exactly is travail? Three basic facts about travail may provide us an answer.

1. Travail is both the dying and birthing part of prayer.

An expectant mother often feels she is at the brink of death during childbirth. The pain is such that even modern medications frequently fail to relieve it. The woman’s “labor” during birth is not only very hard work, but painfully so. This pain is necessary and might be labeled the “dying part” of a mother’s experience when bringing a child into the world. Only as the mother willingly suffers and works at it can new life come forth.

A similar dying process takes place when we travail in prayer. It is a process that takes much time and dedication. Leonard Ravenhill reminds us, “It is true that science has eliminated some of the suffering that our mothers knew in childbirth; but science will never shrink the long slow months of child formation.” (15/134)



2. Travail is the energy put into our praying.

Though our first thought on the subject of travail might seem to suggest this type of prayer involves prolonged praying, it must also be clear that true travail concerns the energy we put into our praying. Spurgeon explains, “God does not hear us because of the length of our prayer, but because of the sincerity of it. Prayer is not to be measured by the yard, nor weighed by the pound. It is the might and force of it—the truth and reality of it—the energy and the intensity of it.” (34/88)

Travail, then, is the might and force of our praying. It concerns the intensity with which we pray.

3. Travail is the depth of our desire in prayer.

The Master of all prayer said, “What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24, KJV). Desire is paramount to powerful praying. The fact is, unless we truly desire a thing we will do little to acquire that thing. Further, the more desire we have for this want, the more intensity will manifest itself as we seek fulfillment of that which is desired. E. M. Bounds suggested that desire is not merely a simple wish but a deep-seated craving. It is an intense longing for attainment. Desire precedes prayer, accompanies it, and is followed by it. Prayer is really nothing but the oral expression of desire. The deeper the desire is in our praying, the stronger our praying will be. William McBirnie adds, “Only prayers which are meant with all the heart and soul are really answered. Jesus in Gethsemane prayed in such agony the bloody sweat stood out on His face. Only real earnestness can propel a prayer far enough to be heard by God.”



Prevailing in Prayer

“There is no power like that of prevailing prayer,” wrote Samuel Chadwick. “It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings life. It brings God.” (1/93)

To prevail in a task is to be victorious in that endeavor. To prevail in prayer, then, is to pray victoriously. Whereas to “travail” in prayer would seem to include the “birthing process” in prayer, to “prevail” in prayer would seem to involve the “conquering process” in prayer. A closer look at the need to prevail in prayer should strengthen this conquering attitude in the prayer warrior’s prayer life.

1. To prevail in prayer is to fight until an answer comes.

Again we cite Spurgeon: “The ancient saints were wont to argue in prayer. When we come to the gate of mercy forcible arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened.” (34/38) Here, to prevail in prayer is explained as arguing one’s case before the High Court of heaven in anticipation of a victorious outcome. It is to “keep on keeping on” in our praying. Prevailing prayer has the patience to wait until an answer comes. Such praying will not retreat until all of Satan’s demons are thrust aside, heaven’s gates opened, and God’s promises come pouring forth.

2. To prevail in prayer is to fight the real enemy of prayer.

Prevailing in prayer has often been labeled as wrestling in prayer. It’s somewhat a combination of traving and prevailing. There is a desperate need for this kind of praying in these troubled times, though we



need to issue a warning here. Some have misunderstood this matter of wrestling in prayer, taking it to mean we are wrestling against God. They picture God as withholding good gifts from His children in such a manner that only prevailing prayer can wrestle these gifts away. Such is not the case at all, and much spiritual damage can be done through this interpretation. Our warfare is not against God but against Satan. Prevailing prayer is really our refusal to allow the enemy to advance.

An illustration from the experience of Martin Luther describes such bold praying. In 1540 Luther's close friend, Frederick Myconius, became extremely ill. Myconius was so convinced he would die that he wrote Luther a farewell letter. The Reformation leader's response was most interesting. He sent back this bold reply: "I command thee in the Name of God to live because I still have need of thee in the work of reforming the Church...the Lord will never let me hear that thou art dead, but will permit thee to survive me. For this I am praying, this is my will, and may my will be done, because I seek only to glorify the Name of God."

History reveals that when Luther wrote this letter his friend's condition had deteriorated beyond natural repair. He had even lost his ability to speak. Death was imminent. Then, a miracle happened. Slowly new life began to flow into Luther's friend and soon he was completely well. And most amazingly, Frederick Myconius actually outlived Martin Luther by two months. Luther's prayer had prevailed! Surely such praying has the capacity to help change our world!



3. To prevail in prayer is to pray with intense earnestness.

This aspect of prevailing in prayer also closely resembles travailing in prayer. Both of these forms of prayer might come under the biblical type of prayer called “supplication.” Certainly to fight hard for a thing involves an intensity of desire for that thing. In travail we deeply desire a thing; here we earnestly fight for that thing. Some have labeled this kind of praying, as did Dr. Torrey—“praying through.” Torrey meant we were not to cease praying until the answer came. To explain this concept, the evangelist shared an experience from his own life involving two persons for whom he had prayed for many years.

The experience began in Torrey’s first pastorate when he felt a unique burden to pray daily for these men, that they might be saved. During his stay at the church the young pastor never ceased praying daily for these individuals, even though nothing seemed to be happening. Torrey finally left the church without seeing the desired results.

The evangelist relates, “I went to Germany for further study, then took another pastorate in Minneapolis, but I kept on praying every day for those two persons. I went back to the place where I began my ministry to hold a series of meetings, praying every day for the conversion of those two persons. Then one night in that series of meetings, when I gave the invitation for all who would accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, those two people arose side by side. There was no special reason why they should be side by side, for they were not relatives. Oh, and when I saw those two persons for whom I had prayed every day through all



those years standing up side by side to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, what an overwhelming sense came over my soul that there is a God, and that He hears prayer if we meet the conditions of prevailing prayer, and follow the method of prevailing prayer taught in His own Word.” (6/129-146)

4. To prevail in prayer is to be fixed in our prayer purpose.

To prevail in prayer demands a solid commitment to the purpose of our praying. It is saying with the Psalmist, “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast” (Psalm 57:7, NKJV). Daniel likewise prayed with such determination: “Then I set my face toward the Lord God to request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes” (Daniel 9:3, NKJV). Even our Lord gives us an example of such determination. The Bible says Jesus “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” as He faced crucifixion on a cross (Luke 9:51). Such determination is a necessity to prevailing in prayer. It is a determination that refuses to give up no matter the cost.



Additional Insights



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL ELEVEN

FASTING AND PRAYER

Anyone can pray, to be sure, but all too few pray with world-changing power. What is it that changes ordinary praying into powerful praying? One sure answer is fasting in prayer. Fasting is the practice of deliberately abstaining from usual nourishment for the purpose of adding power to our prayer as well as stimulating our spiritual growth.

Without question fasting adds power to our praying that is obtained in no other way. S. L. Brengle wrote, “All men who have had spiritual power to prevail with God and man have been men who have learned to sternly deny themselves and keep their bodies under.” (1/112) Fasting is one clear way to “sternly deny” ourselves in order to be more focused in our praying. Every great worker who has significantly impacted his age mightily for God understood and practiced fasting. No study of prayer could ever be complete without a careful look at the importance of fasting in relationship to prayer. Here we examine several facts about the discipline of fasting.

1. Fasting puts the body in its proper place.

The Old Testament teaches that God ordained Israel to set aside a special day annually in order to



“afflict their souls” (Leviticus 16:29, NKJV). It was called the Day of Atonement. The word “afflict,” as used here, seems to suggest that fasting was the means by which man’s spirit took authority over his body. This was done by abstinence, and abstinence caused a certain measure of denial and suffering. The latter was caused because the body is accustomed to its regular intake of food.

In the New Testament Paul addressed the subject in this manner: “But I discipline my body, and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (I Corinthians 9:27, NKJV). Although some might argue that Paul doesn’t specifically refer to fasting here, it is clear that fasting is a key way to accomplish this. When a believer practices the art of fasting he or she is serving notice on his body. It is the spirit saying to the flesh, “I am the boss, and never forget it.”

An interesting sidelight concerns the expression “discipline my body” (or “beat my body,” NIV) as used by Paul in the above verse. Scholars say the thought here is of going into a boxing ring and fighting a fight. To fast is to put up a fight, not just with Satan but with one’s flesh.

2. Fasting gives victory over temptation.

It is obvious that our Lord believed in fasting. He did, after all, begin His ministry with 40 days of fasting (Matthew 4:1-2). Apparently a major purpose of this fasting was to provide Christ victory over temptation. Surely the same would apply to Christ’s followers. No Christian, of course, is ever exempt from temptation. Because of this we need all available power to withstand these attacks. Fasting, though difficult to explain, releases just such power needed to win those battles over both Satan and self.



3. Fasting provides wisdom for making major decisions.

It is significant that Jesus spent an entire night in prayer before choosing His disciples. Many Bible scholars believe He did this without food and water. Perhaps this would suggest that fasting in prayer can be vital to the believer's quest for guidance in serious matters. No doubt fasting aids the prayer warrior in clearing his or her mind of those distractions that might hinder wise decisions.

4. Fasting accelerates the process of world evangelism.

In a noteworthy book on this subject, *Prayer and Fasting*, the author declares, "If God's people will go on to seek Him more earnestly with prayer and fasting on a wider scale, we shall see a move of the Holy Spirit throughout the entire world such as history has never yet recorded. Indeed, we shall see fulfilled the prophecy of Habakkuk 2:14: 'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'" (10/125)

Frankly, if our prayer lists were covered with far more prayer and fasting, our new converts lists would hardly hold the names. Fasting adds a mysterious, though obvious, power to all our efforts. The most recent missionary research estimates indicate that over 200,000 people are coming to Christ throughout the world every day, including as many as 50,000 alone in China. Surely much of these extraordinary results can be traced to the increased emphasis on fasting and prayer in recent years.



5. Fasting was vital in the lives of past Church leaders.

Even a casual study of Church history reveals how important fasting was to those who paved the way in spreading the Gospel around the world. Consider the early days of the powerful Methodist revival. John Wesley so believed in the importance of fasting that he refused to ordain young men to the Methodist ministry who would not fast a portion of two days each week, Wednesdays and Fridays, until the evening meal. Martin Luther fasted regularly, as did John Knox. Concerning fasting, Charles Finney said, "Sometimes I would find myself, in a great measure, empty of this power. I would go and visit, and find that I made no saving impression. I would exhort and pray, with the same result. I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me, and would inquire anxiously after the reason of this apparent emptiness. After humbling myself and crying out for help, the power would return upon me with all its freshness. This has been the experience of my life." (1/113) It is clearly evident that church leaders of generations past believed much in the power of fasting.

6. Fasting prepares for effective leadership.

Fasting also seems to release power needed to prepare workers for the difficult tasks of world evangelization, as well as the care of the churches. Fasting mysteriously deals with the stubborn self-will of the inner man as it conquers outward desires of the flesh. Fasting seems to prepare the prayer warrior for an increased effectiveness in leadership since a Christian can only go forth to conquer the enemy after he has conquered himself.



7. Fasting leads to direct victory over Satan.

We recall the account in Scripture where Jesus and three disciples witnessed God's glory on a mountain near Jerusalem. When they came down from the mountain the other disciples were attempting to deliver a demon-possessed boy. Frantically they sought a victory, but nothing seemed to bring deliverance. Observing their difficulty, Jesus stepped forth and promptly healed the youth. Then the Master carefully instructed His disciples on the secret to spiritual power. He said, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29, NKJV).

This account in Mark suggests that fasting leads to direct power over Satan. Whereas other prayer slows Satan, fasting—with prayer—appears to stop Satan in his tracks. It is not that regular prayer is absent of power but that fasting brings added power. Professor Hallesby provides this insight, "To make use of a rather mechanical, but nevertheless vivid illustration, we might compare this [fasting], with the transmission of electrical power. The greater the volume of power to be transmitted, the stronger the connection with the power house must be; that is, the larger the cable must be. Fasting helps to give us that inner sense of spiritual penetration by means of which we can discern clearly that for which the Spirit of prayer would have us pray in exceptionally different circumstances." (2/117)



Lecture Hall Three

STUDY HALL TWELVE

CONFESSION IN PRAYER

A warrior's prayer life is, as suggested in the previous Lecture Hall (chapter two), clearly affected by the prayer warrior's personal life. The channel to heaven must always be free of un-confessed sin. For this reason, a time of confession should be a major part of one's prayer time. John Lavender suggests, "The first thing that should concern you in your conversation with God is personal cleansing. Before you pray for a change of circumstances, you should pray for a change in character." (39/18) Charles Spurgeon held a similar view: "For a successful season of prayer the best beginning is confession." (34/49)

Concerning this matter of confession, one area of confusion should be addressed. There are some who feel it is unnecessary to confess any sins once they have accepted Christ as Savior. Scripture, however, makes it clear that to foster sin in the heart definitely hinders effective praying (Psalm 66:18). On the other hand, we should not keep ourselves from prayer because we feel we are such sinners that God won't hear us in our present state. Rosalind Rinker explained how this matter of un-confessed sin plagued her for years. She said, "I tried to die to sin. I tried to confess it all. I tried to believe it was all gone. Now with great relief, I know I am a sinner being saved. I am not doing it myself. I have been saved,



I am being saved, and I shall be saved.” (38/74) The fact is, the best place to deal with un-confessed sin is in the place of prayer where we can confess it.

The prayer warrior, then, if his or her prayers are to pack power, must not allow un-confessed sin to cloud a prayer time. Deal with the issue early in prayer. And in all of our discussion of this subject of confession we must be careful to avoid legalism. It is not my intent to suggest we must become permanently free of making mistakes; it simply means we should recognize the need to confess these mistakes (indeed, sins) so our praying will not be hindered by any sin that remains un-confessed. Confession, then, clears the way for our petition to be heard in heaven.

Norman Vincent Peale shares a story that well illustrates this. As a young boy, Peale managed to find a large cigar. Hurrying off to a secluded place he carried his prized possession. Cautiously he lit the cigar. It didn't taste good, relates Dr. Peale, but it made him feel quite grown up, at least until he saw his father coming. Quickly hiding the cigar behind his back, young Peale tried desperately to appear casual. Hoping to divert his father's attention the lad spotted a billboard advertising the circus coming to town.

“Can I go, Dad?” Peale begged. “Can I go to the circus when it comes to town? Please, Dad?”

The father's quiet reply contains a vital lesson for all prayer warriors. “Son,” the older Peale responded, “one of the first lessons you need to learn about life is this: never make a petition while at the same time trying to hide a smoldering disobedience behind your back.” (39/21)





CHAPTER 4

Lecture Hall Four

THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S PRAYER MISSION

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Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL ONE

OUR MISSION: CHANGE THE WORLD

History proves, beyond question, that prayer impacts the world. A prayer warrior on his or her knees embarks on a mission capable of altering the very destiny of men and nations. When the great Reformation swept Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries it was sparked by and sustained by persistent prayer. The Huguenots had been instrumental in bringing revival to France but the enemies of the cross, in a dreadful purge called St. Bartholomew's Massacre, martyred many of the Christians. The nation of France never recovered and finally drifted into a bloody revolution.

A similar thing might have happened in Scotland, had it not been for John Knox. We recall his prayer, "Give me Scotland or I die." Prayer, again, helped alter history.

A study of past revivals in England reveals the same. Great Britain was rapidly slipping into the condition of her French neighbor. But John and Charles Wesley, along with George Whitefield, began their historic prayer meetings, and a mighty revival resulted. Once again prayer altered the course of history.

The Bible, too, is filled with examples of nations transformed through prayer. When young Daniel,



perhaps not yet 20 years of age, arrived on the scene in Babylon, little did he realize the future impact of his prayers. In fact, near the end of Daniel's life, at 90 years old, it had been his prayer and fasting that had opened the path for the restoration of Israel. Over a period of almost 70 years the major changes in the destiny of God's people can be traced to those prayers of Daniel.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus told His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth...." In this statement Christ likens the Christian's existence on earth to common salt.

What do we know about salt? For one thing, salt is made from two vastly different elements; the active metal, sodium, and the deadly gas, chlorine. These unique forces combine to make a substance common to every household.

Why did Jesus use salt as an example of our work on earth? Perhaps because salt adds flavor, making otherwise unacceptable food acceptable. Thus, the believer's function on earth is to add flavor. Our presence on earth, then, makes the earth acceptable to God. If believers were removed, God would have no choice but to destroy it.

There is, perhaps, a greater function of salt. It restrains the process of spoiling. Years ago, before refrigeration, salt was used to preserve meat on long voyages across the ocean. Here we discover another reason Christ has positioned Christians on this planet. We not only make earth acceptable to God but we preserve the work of God around the world. And not only do we preserve it, we spread it. Our mission as Christians, then, is vital. We are to spread the message of God's love to every person on earth, thus increasing the



earth's supply of spiritual "salt." We are, in a sense, salt manufacturers.

The purpose of this Lecture Hall in our study is to carefully examine our mission of prayer. God is calling us to become world prayer missionaries. Much will be required if we are to complete this mission successfully. We begin by looking at these requirements for those who choose to enlist in this global prayer force and embark on a mission of intercession to transform the world.

Enlistment Requirements

1. The mission will require total helplessness and dependence.

Surely those who believe they can accomplish everything on their own will make poor prayer warriors. Only the helpless really understand prayer. Professor Hallesby states, "Prayer is a mysterious instrumentality and can, in the final analysis, be employed to full effect and with perfect success only by those who are helpless." (2/152) Frankly, those who believe they can do the job by themselves are a hindrance. This special force needs Christians who know they cannot accomplish the task alone. These believers make the best intercessors.

2. The mission will require a special vision.

It is impossible for any mission to be accomplished without vision. In battle, the generals must always have a mental picture of their goal. They know where they are going mentally before the first troop-carrier starts its engines.



We, too, need a special vision if our prayer mission is to be successful. It is fourfold. Three of the four aspects of this vision are described in Isaiah chapter six where the prophet saw the Lord high and lifted up in the temple. (See Isaiah 6:3-8.) Three things, in particular, were essential to the vision.

First, it was an *upward vision*. Isaiah saw the Lord. If we are to accomplish our prayer mission we must keep our eyes constantly on Jesus.

Second, Isaiah's vision was an *inward vision*. The prophet saw himself as he truly was. Isaiah writes, "Woe to me...I am ruined!" (Isaiah 6:5, NIV) Before we seek to do much for God, we must see ourselves as we truly are. Only in this way can we maintain the helplessness mentioned earlier.

Third, Isaiah had an *outward vision*. The prophet saw the world and expressed his willingness to go into it as God's tool (Isaiah 6:8-9). Only as we look beyond ourselves and see the world Christ described as "ready to harvest" (John 4:35) will we be able to carry out this vital prayer mission.

The fourth aspect of the vision needed for our mission is provided by General William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army. It might be labeled a *downward vision*. Booth once said that if he could do it, he would have finalized the training of his soldiers with 24 hours of hanging over hell. Only as they knew the fury of hell could they know the value of salvation. We, too, must realize the eternal pain and separation from which each lost soul is being saved. This will add an entirely new dimension to our praying.



3. The mission will require intense effort.

In the early demanding days of our prayer ministry a friend often said, “Remember, Dick, everything degenerates into work.” He was quoting the management expert Peter Drucker. Prayer, like any aspect of Christian service, involves hard work. Perhaps prayer even involves the greatest effort of all service because we do not always see immediate results from prayer. To preach a sermon or witness to a neighbor may produce immediate, observable results. Prayer’s results, however, are not always seen. But one thing is certain: powerful praying produces powerful results. Ravenhill wrote, “The law of prayer is the law of harvest: Sow sparingly in prayer, reap sparingly; sow bountifully in prayer, reap bountifully. The trouble is we are trying to get from our efforts what we never put into them.” (15/119)

4. The mission will require total dedication.

Soldiers in battle must pay a costly price. Often they give up sleep and food for days. On occasion they shed their blood and sometimes sacrifice their very lives for the cause. Theirs is a mission requiring total dedication. It is a price we, too, must pay if our prayer mission is to succeed. Like troops going into battle, we are soldiers of the Lord. Each of us is, as James McClure suggests, “A soldier in the field, enlisted under Christ and for Christ, to do a soldier’s service.” (32/62)

5. The mission will require making prayer our reason for being.

E. M. Bounds said it best, “Our one great business is prayer, and we will never do it well unless we fasten to



it by all binding force.” (20) Indeed, if we are to accept a place in the great task of world evangelism as world prayer missionaries, our chief reason for being must be prayer. This is essential. We cannot do everything. So we must do the chief thing. Let others do what they feel is most important, but we will give ourselves to prayer. We must remain utterly convinced that prayer, alone, will transform our troubled world.

The Focus of Our Prayer Mission

Because we are enlisting as missionaries who will travel the world by prayer, it is important we understand the focus of our prayer. Time is just as easily wasted in prayer as in any endeavor. Thus, we must choose our words in prayer well, and direct our petitions in a manner that brings the greatest impact. To help the student of prayer focus on serious needs we share the following:

1. We should focus our prayer on local and world leaders.

Paul spoke to Timothy about interceding “for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1, NKJV). Following this challenge, the first specific topic for prayer concerns “kings and all who are in authority.” From this Scripture it is clear that we are to pray for all leaders in government (locally, nationally and globally), whether kings, queens, presidents, dictators, or whatever their title may be. If a person is in authority, we are to pray for that person.

What is to be our chief request when praying for those in authority? We do know Paul says the result of our prayer should be “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:2b, NKJV). And since this can only



happen in countries with honest, just governmental leadership, we can conclude that our prayer should be for good government. To be sure, lack of freedom is directly traced to ineffective government. We need to concentrate daily prayers on key leaders all over the world. Presently more than 40 nations in the Islamic world are closed or severely limit preaching the Gospel or any systematic distribution of the message of Christ. Their governments (and religious forces that control them) refuse to allow such Gospel work. Our mission is to change those governments or their attitudes by focusing much prayer on their leaders.

2. We should focus prayer on individual nations and people groups.

When Jesus set forth the words of His model prayer, commonly referred to as The Lord's Prayer, it is interesting that He began with the word "our." Then, He later taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come." As suggested earlier, Jesus wanted to put world evangelism as the first priority in this prayer. He wants us to include all the nations of the world in our praying. God's kingdom can only come as we evangelize the more than 200 nations of the world where many millions are waiting for their first word that Jesus loves them. We must focus our prayers daily on these nations if this generation is to see Christ's kingdom come. (Of great help in reminding us of these many nations, is the World Prayer Map available through Every Home for Christ. See information at the end of this study.)

3. We should focus prayer on "all people."

Paul says we are not only to pray for leaders in authority, but "for all people" (1 Timothy 2:1, NLT). In the



Old Testament the High Priest came into the Holy of Holies with the breastplate over his heart, upon which was written the name of every tribe of Israel. (See Exodus 28:29.) This was a reminder that he represented every person of every tribe as he offered atonement for their sins. When we pray we must think in terms of individual people who need a personal experience in Jesus. We are claiming souls for the Lord. God told the Psalmist, “Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession” (Psalm 2:8, NLT). For those who might suggest this is strictly a Messianic Psalm (i.e., only a promise given by the Father to His Son, Jesus Christ), we remind them of Paul’s words to Roman believers about their relationship to Christ. He wrote: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...” (Romans 8:16-17a, NKJV). This promise, likewise for us today, makes it clear that what God has promised His Son is ours, too. We have the right to claim the nations for Jesus.

I further question what I believe is a frequently misunderstood interpretation of Christ’s longest recorded prayer in Scripture (John 17). Some cite the phrase of our Lord, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world” (v. 9, KJV) as a basis that we really shouldn’t pray for the nations (or the lost) because Jesus didn’t. I’m doubly surprised about this interpretation. First, because only a few verses later in this prayer, Jesus says, “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony” (v. 20, NLT). Those who are yet to believe, of course, are still lost. Jesus is therefore praying for those who will be saved at some point in the future. So, Christ is clearly suggesting He is praying for the lost.



But there is another observation I have regarding those who highlight the phrase Jesus used in John 17:9 (“I pray not for the world”) as a basis to suggest we shouldn’t pray for the lost. Jesus could well be saying that in this specific prayer he is not doing such. There are often times in my own prayers that I don’t pray that day for a specific thing that I might usually pray for. To suggest that because Jesus said in this particular prayer that He wasn’t praying for something doesn’t necessarily mean He never prayed for such a thing, or something similar, on other occasions. This is but one prayer from the life of Jesus. He may well have prayed for the lost on other occasions. (Note John’s reminder in John 21:25 that Jesus did many other things that simply were not recorded.)

4. We should focus prayer on the need for laborers.

Certainly a major focus of our prayer should center on the need for laborers in the Lord’s harvest. We recall Jesus standing before the multitudes who were scattered and divided “like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, NIV). Deeply moved at what He saw, Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37, 38, NIV). Here Jesus sets forth the greatest lack in missions today—workers. In the same words Christ provides His solution to all missionary challenges. It isn’t to be found in money or machinery. The answer is prayer. Having stated the urgent need for more workers, Jesus gives us the one-word solution to every problem we will ever face regarding the harvest: “Ask.”



5. We should focus prayer on the need for revival as well as the harvest.

Prayer should always focus on two major areas. In the Church, we need revival. Outside the Church, we need a harvest of souls. The two are separate though directly related. A revival is not a harvest, though true revival often initiates a harvest. A revival is the stirring up of those already in the Church. A harvest is bringing the unsaved into the Church. And let us remember the Church is not a building; it is Christ's Body. In scriptural terms a harvest is the ingathering of souls. Prayer alone will give us the power to give birth to both. All praying should include a request for a revival in the Church, and a harvest in the world.

6. We should focus prayer on new converts.

Related closely to our previous thought is a reminder to pray specifically for new converts who are a part of the harvest. It is difficult for Christians living in heavily evangelized nations to realize the problems facing new converts of other lands. In some cases the obstacles are almost insurmountable. Some converts to Christ are expelled from home and community. And, of course, there are the old habits, the mental and physical attacks, and in general, the increased spiritual warfare these converts face. When interceding for a specific nation or people group, pray particularly for those new believers who encounter hostility. Ask the Lord to surround them with His glory and to cause ministering angels to protect them.



7. We should focus prayer on the national churches of other lands.

When new converts come together and form small churches—referred to as Christ Groups at Every Home for Christ—the enemy will certainly wage an all-out attack against them. Prayer must be focused on these national churches. Remember, as these believers grow, they, too, will send out workers. And their new converts may someday become workers in the harvest as well. Most successful world evangelism ministries depend greatly on these national churches for helping to spread the Gospel. Without such devoted workers who know both the culture and the language, the job would be all but impossible.

8. We should focus prayer on missionary organizations and their needs.

There are literally thousands of different Protestant denominations in North America in addition to thousands of churches referred to as independent or interdenominational. Obviously each of these groups feels there is something unique enough about their doctrinal interpretations that each felt it necessary to establish a separate and distinct group. We should pray that God will cause many of these entities to come together in a spirit of unity and cooperate in projects that truly have a capacity to transform our world. Further, the job of reaching every person on earth with the message of Christ's love is both physically demanding and financially challenging. In many countries the sharing of the Gospel is hopelessly hindered for months and even years because of a lack of resources. Throughout the world we also find a rapidly increasing rate of inflation that adds to the problem. Unless we



focus much prayer on this need, millions will never have the opportunity to know Jesus loves them.

Accepting the Challenge

The challenge before us is truly enormous. Without vast numbers of Christians accepting the “call to prayer” the job cannot be accomplished. Following are several reasons why Christians must accept this crucial challenge if we are to evangelize our world in this generation.

Firstly, we must accept this challenge because the absence of prayer means an absence of fruit.

E. M. Bounds wrote, “If prayer puts God to work on earth, then, by the same token, prayerlessness rules God out of the world’s affairs, and prevents Him from working. In reality the denial of prayer is a denial of God Himself, for God and prayer are so inseparable that they can never be divorced.” (5/22)

Undoubtedly there will be little fruit if there is little prayer. Prayer is the key to all missionary success. Money, though critical, is not the primary key. On this subject Evangelist R. A. Torrey responds, “Doubtless more men and more money are needed for foreign mission work, but the greatest need...is prayer. It is a sad fact that much money given to mission work has been largely wasted. There has not been enough intelligent prayer in back of the giving.” (12/67) On another occasion the evangelist said tersely, “Without prayer money will be a curse rather than a blessing.”



Secondly, Christians must accept this challenge because lost souls depend upon our prayers.

A modern parable is told of Christ returning to heaven after His resurrection. All the angels gathered for the gala celebration. During the festivities, the angels gathered around God's Son to hear about His many experiences on earth. Christ told the angels how He healed the sick, raised the dead, and performed miracles among the multitudes. Then, He told them the story of how He died on the cross that man might be free from sin. He also explained how He rose again from the dead on the third day. As Jesus finished His account, all of heaven was silent. Suddenly one of the angels declared, "Lord, it's our turn to participate. We will go to earth and tell the masses of all you've done for them."

The Lord quietly shook His head and answered, "No, that will not be possible."

All the angels were puzzled and another inquired, "How, then, are you going to send this message to everyone on earth?"

In a confident tone the Master answered, "I have left this responsibility in the hands of 11 fishermen."

With a questioning look another angel quickly responded, "But, Lord, what if they fail?"

Jesus answered, "I have no other plan."

God has no other plan for world evangelism but you and me. Further, a major part of His plan concerns prayer. Our prayer mission is to claim back souls of lost men who really belong to God. A. J. Gordon declares, "As



your service leads you on to a bit of ground that is held by the forces of evil, remember this: that bit of ground belongs to man, to be held by him for God. It has been lost through disobedience. But it has been won back by Jesus, the Victor. You have the right to step in and say, 'I take, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, I take this back for Him: I take the life of this man, for whom my Master gave His blood.'"(1/41)

Thirdly, we must accept this challenge because prayer alone can change men and nations.

Hope MacDonald declares, "All God wants to do in this world through you can only be done through prayer." (35/17) It is imperative Christians accept this important challenge because only prayer can reach beyond such barriers as the bamboo or iron curtains. Consider the impact of prayer in bringing down the iron curtain in the final two decades of the 20th century. Harold Lindsell explains, "Distance is no...barrier to reaching the remotest place on earth. Nor is the power of prayer diminished by the distance between the person who prays and the person who is prayed for. Men and nations can and do have their destinies decided by God's praying people who, through intercessory prayer, wield power greater than the armed might of the nations of the earth." (27/52,53)

How exactly does prayer accomplish all this? E. M. Bounds answers, "Prayer affects men by affecting God. Prayer moves men because it moves God to move men. Prayer influences men by influencing God to influence them." (23)

The battle for men and nations is, indeed, fought hardest on our knees. To a younger Jonathan Goforth



who had gone to China from Canada as a missionary, Dr. Hudson Taylor, a veteran in China ministry, wrote, “Brother, if you are to win that province (North Hunan in China), you must go forward on your knees.” (1/50) Here is a crucial lesson for participants in Christ’s School of Prayer. The real hope for world evangelization centers in praying Christians. They alone hold the key to transforming nations.

Finally, we must accept this challenge because prayer is the solid foundation of all missionary efforts.

When the history of world evangelism is written, one thing will be clear: Prayer was the basis for all lasting missionary accomplishments. Referring to the orator Henry Ward Beecher, Kenyon emphasized, “A man might preach with the eloquence of a Beecher and be the most skilled of diplomats as a soul winner, but he will fall short of his ministry in both fields if he isn’t backed up by the prayer life.” (9/25) Another preacher adds, “Missions have their root in prayer. It must have prayer in all of its plans and prayer must precede, go with and follow all of its missionaries and laborers.” (5/93)

Only as Christians everywhere accept this urgent challenge to join a mission of prayer to all the world will all the world know the love of Jesus.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL TWO

THE ENEMY OF PRAYER

Someone has said, “When God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil will open the door of hell to blast us. God’s smile means the devil’s frown!” (15/26) Clearly, a major purpose for prayer is to attack the enemy of God, Satan. And for those who are doing the attacking it is vital they know and recognize their enemy. Only as we recognize the enemy’s tactics are we capable of effectively thwarting him. To this end, consider these facts about the enemy of prayer.

1. Satan is a tangible enemy.

Watchman Nee explains, “It is often possible to move men when it is quite impossible to move Satan. The plain fact is that it costs much more to deal with Satan than to win souls.” (1/48) Satan is clearly a tangible enemy. He is especially difficult to deal with because many fail to recognize his reality. Jessie Penn-Lewis explains, “It is only as we advance in spiritual growth that we apprehend that our foes are actually spirit beings, distinct personal entities. They are geographically in a place, or they are geographically out of it. They come, and they go away when they are defeated (James 4:7). In order to recognize and defeat them, you must recognize the reality of their existence. As long as they are vaguely described as an ‘influence’ you will fail to obtain real



victory over them; just as when you think of the Holy Spirit only as an ‘influence’ you lose the knowledge of Him as a person.” (37/10) The great American evangelist Dwight L. Moody once humorously preached, “I believe in the devil for two reasons: first, because the Bible tells me he exists; and, secondly, because I’ve had personal dealings with him.”

2. Satan has a powerful, well-organized army.

When we observe the spread of evil around the world, we are left with a strong impression that somewhere beyond the realm of the physical is a well-organized spiritual army manipulating this dark force. Concerning this force E. M. Blaiklock says, “Its treachery and power, the portentous phenomena of Satanism which this age has known, certainly adds to the conviction that a supernatural power is behind it all.” (14/62)

Paul reminds us that our “fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil” (Ephesians 6:12, Phillips).

Certainly Paul was convinced that man’s soul was a battlefield where Satan and his spiritual forces waged warfare. He spoke of “principalities and powers” as well as “the rulers of the darkness of this age” who were more effective than human beings because they were unseen. (See Ephesians 6:10-12, NKJV.) Evaluating this dark force, E. W. Kenyon declares, “We are surrounded by demonic forces that are dominating humans on earth, and if the Church hasn’t authority over these, then no one has.” The evangelist confidently concludes, “But the Church has!



And prayer is our method and motive dominating these diabolical forces that are wrecking civilization.” (9/11)

3. Satan fears God’s power wrought in prayer.

Satan fears the power of prayer more than any other known force. To Satan, prayer is lethal. Andrew Murray said, “God’s children can conquer everything by prayer. Is it any wonder that Satan does his utmost to snatch that weapon from a Christian or to hinder him in the use of it?” (6/42) Indeed, Satan is not afraid of man’s plans against him, he is only afraid of God’s power brought into those plans. Prayer releases God’s power into man’s plans and for this reason Satan wages an intensive fight against all who would pray. R. Sibbes explains, “When we go to God by prayer, the devil knows we go to fetch strength against him, and therefore he opposes us all he can.” (15/22)

Goals of the Enemy

Any organized effort has goals, and Satan’s organization is no exception. Perhaps if we better understand the enemy’s goals in relationship to our praying, we will better understand how to fight Satan’s forces.

1. Satan’s goal is to lead Christians into error.

Satan especially desires to see Christians make critical mistakes. Jessie Penn-Lewis says, “The enemy pushes truth too far, so that it becomes error; and even what is true can absorb you too much, so that you can become blind to all else. Whenever one thing possesses your mind so that you cannot think of anything else, it has gone too far, because if one truth occupies your



mind entirely, it closes it to God's fresh revelation, and this is not a healthy spiritual condition." (37/29)

Praying Christians, especially, must be on guard concerning areas of error. Such error usually comes through misinterpretation of Scripture, thus leading believers into false doctrine. As someone has well said, "If Satan can't stop you, he'll push you too far."

2. Satan's goal is to frustrate Christians in God's plan.

No one knows better than Satan how little time he has to accomplish his objectives on earth. Revelation 12:12 declares, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (NKJV). Because time is clearly short, Satan attempts to frustrate Christians as they attempt to accomplish the task of world evangelization. He realizes many Christians are committed to accomplish this and that little will stop them. Thus, Satan's only hope is to slow them down by causing frustrating circumstances.

Grace Klahr, writing in *The Voice of the Wilderness*, says, "Satan is well aware that the Day of Grace is soon to end. He is familiar with prophecy and understands the signs of the times, and as he sees his time shortening, his malignity is more manifest. He can only wreak his vengeance on God in the person of His saints." The writer concludes, "Satan knows that the man or woman of prayer—the one who really prays believingly—is the greatest single hindrance that there is in the world to the accomplishment of his purpose." Because of this, Satan will do all in his power to frustrate praying believers as they attempt to advance against him on behalf of lost humankind.



3. Satan's goal is to keep Christians from prayer.

Hope MacDonald asks the question, "Have you ever stopped to wonder what the devil's favorite word might be? I've thought a lot about this and have come to the conclusion that his favorite word is tomorrow. He is always trying to keep us from praying today. In fact, that must be one of his main jobs—to keep all Christians off their knees." (35/28)

If prayer does more damage to Satan than anything, he must fear prayer more than anything. Samuel Chadwick adds, "The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from prayer. He fears nothing from prayer-less studies, prayer-less work, or prayer-less religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."(23)

Preparation for Spiritual Warfare

A volume easily could be written on the subject of preparation for spiritual warfare. We will use our limited space to share but three basic fundamentals concerning preparation for Satan's spiritual attacks.

1. We must prepare to fight great battles with, and against, our flesh.

It is well said that no man has won a deep and vital victory in prayer who has not battled with the flesh and known the tension that comes through that lonely fight. Gordon B. Watte says, "Prayer is not merely a closet exercise of personal communion but an acting with God in His battle against evil. Are we taking up the challenge of Satan in our own home, with its tests and trials? When we slacken, the powers of darkness press in. When we



fail to pray, the powerhouse of the church shuts its doors.” (1/42)

Prayer is not a casual parlor game that requires only minimal effort. To be sure, there will be times of beautiful and quiet communion with our Father during prayer, but there will also be times when great battles are fought. Most of these battles will involve our flesh, meaning our humanness with all that accompanies it. To prepare for this spiritual warfare we need to prepare for many confrontations with the flesh. The key to victory in this regard is to spend much time in God’s Word while in personal prayer.

2. We must develop a hatred of Satan and all that is evil.

Earlier in our study much was shared on the importance of Christians developing a “right spirit” toward others, if we are to be effective prayer warriors. This is not to be the case when dealing with Satan. If we are to be fully prepared for spiritual warfare, we must develop a hatred of all that is evil and all that Satan stands for. If we tolerate his advances in the slightest way, we will lose hard-earned ground that we may never gain back. The author of Proverbs wrote, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Proverbs 8:13, NKJV). Those who become the most effective of intercessors are those who find anything sinful as repulsive. At the first sign of sin they respond immediately to Paul’s injunction: “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1, NKJV).



3. We must recognize that all battles are really spiritual.

We should never allow ourselves to think circumstances that hinder the spread of the Gospel, or even everyday temptations and spiritual attacks are accidental. All such hindrances are generally the work of Satan. Spiritual warfare is going on about us constantly. We aren't fighting evil dictators when we pray for the doors of their nations to open to the Gospel; we are fighting "spirit" powers that influence these evil dictators. Because the warfare is spiritual, only spiritual weapons can win it. Prayer is the primary spiritual weapon that will enable us to accomplish the task.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL THREE

PROBLEMS IN PRAYER

No matter how many sermons, seminars, or books teach, train and talk about prayer, there will always be unanswered questions on this subject. These questions concern problems and hindrances that lurk in the shadows along this too-little-traveled pathway to power. To provide the student of prayer with a better understanding of this subject, consider some of the more serious problems and hindrances that must be confronted in our journey of prayer. Of course, before we find deliverance from any of these problems, or obtain the strength to move such an obstacle from the path, we must first desire to be set free from these hindrances. Unfortunately, some hindrances to prayer exist not because they are greater than our power to remove them, but because we rather prefer to have them around. A wise writer said, "Some of these enemies are very dear friends. We have associated with them for many years, and it will be hard for us to give them up." (9/141) But give them up we must if our prayer mission is to see success. Examine 11 such problems with me as we carry out our mission of prayer to men and nations.



Problem One: Failure to recognize our position in Christ.

“I am convinced that the most outstanding enemy in prayer,” wrote E. W. Kenyon, “is the lack of knowledge of what we are in Christ, and of what He is in us, and what He did for us, and of our standing and legal rights before the throne.” (9/141) Because many lack an understanding of their power in Christ, they find it difficult to pray. Some even question their right to pray at all. Each time they try to talk with God, past sins saturate their minds. They fail to recognize that when Jesus was raised from the dead He gave them new life, even for their praying. Only by recognizing our position in Christ can we recognize our power over Satan.

Problem Two: Failure to ask.

This problem is also referred to as the sin of prayerlessness. It might seem rather unusual classifying a “failure to ask” under the category of “problems.” But it is a fact. Many have difficulty with their prayer life because they have no prayer life. Dr. Hallesby explains, “God has all that we need, and there is nothing that He would rather do than impart to us His gifts. But we do not ask. We do not have time, we say. Or we forget to pray. The result is that we go about like spiritual cripples or dwarfs, spiritually starved and emaciated, with scarcely enough strength to stand on our own feet, not to speak of fighting against sin and serving the Lord.” (2/37)

Just as there are results of praying, there are results of not praying. E. M. Bounds elaborates, “Failure to pray is failure along the whole line of life. It is failure of duty, service, and spiritual progress. God desires to help man by prayer. He who does not pray, therefore, robs



himself of God's help and places God where He cannot help man." (5/9) Said succinctly, God is only helpless when we make Him so by the neglect of prayer.

Problem Three: Laziness.

Someone has said, "The more of an effort prayer becomes, the more easily it is neglected." It is truly unfortunate that many Christians are simply lazy when it comes to prayer. Related to this problem of laziness is what Kenyon labels "mental assent." He defines mental assent as "admiring the Word." Kenyon adds, "You may have been called a fundamentalist, and you may have confessed that you believe the Word from Genesis to Revelation; but when it comes to acting on it, you have never done it. You are like one that knows all the ingredients that are in a certain dish that you had for dinner. You are able to diagnose every feature about it. But you don't eat it. It does you no good." (9/143)

Flowing from both laziness and mental assent is still another problem, rationalization. This occurs when we use Satan as a scapegoat for our failures. To some it even sounds somewhat spiritual to say, "I yelled at my wife yesterday because Satan got the best of me." All of this centers on excuse-making. We attempt to "excuse away" the fact that we simply do not want to pray. And we don't desire to pray because we are lazy.

Problem Four: Negative praying.

Another serious problem to be confronted concerns "negative praying." Earlier we spoke of deadly faith-killers, suggesting the danger of "negative thinking." To be sure, negative prayers produce negative results. E. W. Kenyon cautions, "Don't have a double confession so



that one moment you confess, ‘Yes, He heard my prayer. I am healed,’ or ‘I will get the money,’ and then begin to question how it is going to come and what you ought to do to get it.” The writer adds, “Don’t talk doubt or unbelief. Don’t talk about sickness and disease. Never talk about failure. Talk about the Word, its absolute integrity, and of your utter confidence in it; of your ability to act on it; and hold fast to your confession of its truthfulness.” (9/145)

Too many of our prayers focus on our shortcomings, inadequacies and failures. These prayers can hardly produce positive results because they are offered from a negative position. To overcome negative praying is relatively simple—pray only positive prayers and saturate those prayers with much of the nature and character of God. Joy Dawson, a remarkable Bible teacher on the subjects of prayer and intercession, once told me how she had been invited to attend a small prayer gathering of young evangelists in Holland. She struggled through the meeting for nearly 30 minutes and finally interrupted the gathering. She told the group, “I’m going to go someplace else to pray if you don’t mind. I’ve been here for almost half an hour and it’s clear from your praying that you are more impressed with Satan’s power than you are with God’s.” The youthful team quickly got the message. They were praying negative prayers. Indeed, the more we saturate our praying with the wonder of who God is, the less we are impressed with who Satan is and the more positive our praying becomes.



Problem Five: Shallow prayer.

Another serious problem facing the prayer warrior is shallow prayer. Too many prayers are offered with a “do I really care” attitude. This is shallow or empty praying. This type of praying is not found in Scripture. Both Elisha and Christ are recorded as praying earnestly. Earnest prayer is the solution to the problem of shallow prayer. Keith Miller describes the latter when he reminds us of his childhood prayer, “Dear God, forgive me for all the bad things I do. Help me to do better. Thank you for all the many blessings you have given me. Help everybody everywhere.” True, for a child this may seem like a rather acceptable prayer. But God longs for His children to go well beyond generalized “everybody everywhere” prayers. Which “bodies” and “where?” The more specific we pray, the more we move from shallow praying.

Another key to overcoming this problem of shallow praying is to develop sincerity in our praying. Shallow prayer is often meaningless prayer. The opposite, then, is to add meaning to our prayer. We must replace the “who cares” in our prayer with a heartfelt “I really do care.”

Problem Six: Unfavorable answers.

Perhaps the greatest problem plaguing prayer warriors concerns unfavorable answers.

To be sure, God knows exactly which of our prayers should be answered and why. We must leave this decision to God alone. Surely there are times, looking in retrospect, that we are pleased God did not answer some of our prayers. Marcus Dodds adds this insight, “Answered prayer is not always a blessing, sometimes



it is a doom: ‘He sent them meat to the full...But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them.’” Ancient Israel’s prayers had been answered, but at what cost? (See Numbers 11:33.)

There is much more involved in prayer than we may think. Virginia Whitman, in her excellent book, *Mustard*, shares the example of a commercial gardener who prays for a bumper crop that will bring a nice profit. He may even desire to give a portion of that profit to the Lord’s work. But it might be that a very large quantity of that particular product, thrust into the market all at one time, might glut the market and result in a serious loss to other growers. Further, a surplus of that commodity might lessen the demand for another item, and this could work hardship on someone else. It might even go beyond this. The bountiful crop could affect import and export quotations, balance of trade operations, and many other things. The author concludes, “Our finite minds cannot encompass all the ramifications of a single situation, but God can, and He must act accordingly, justly and impartially for the benefit of all.” (7/90,91)

In the truest sense, God really answers all prayer. We do not mean He gives us exactly what we desire, but He does answer our prayer. Paul’s experience with his thorn in the flesh illustrates this thought. Of this thorn Paul says, “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me” (2 Corinthians 12:8, NKJV). This follows with a significant phrase that readers often overlook: “And He [God] said to me.” Here is God’s answer to Paul’s prayer. True, the Lord does not answer Paul’s prayer in a manner favorable to the apostle, but He does answer. God realized that a “no” would help teach Paul to depend more on Him.



King David received a similar negative answer. It came in response to his prayer for the life of Bathsheba's child (2 Samuel 15-20). The child, of course, died, much to David's deep disappointment. But only God could possibly know what the offspring of that adulterous relation might one day produce.

Certainly God knows the reasons for answering our prayers in a particular way. And, of course, God's way always leads to an ultimate blessing in the end. Maria Von Trapp, whose story was popularized in the movie, *The Sound of Music*, said it with such wisdom, "When God closes a door, He always opens a window!"

Problem Seven: Emotions.

Another problem that can plague prayer warriors involves our emotions. Some potential people of prayer condition themselves to wait until they "feel like praying," hence, they seldom pray. The author of *The Problem With Prayer Is* shares this caution: "When it comes to prayer, feeling is not the most important thing. Feelings are fickle, easily influenced by health, morale, weather and mood. Prayer is too important to be put at the mercy of our feelings." (4/60)

J. Hudson Taylor provides additional advice on this point. Asked late in life if he always prayed with a consciousness of joy, Taylor explained that generally his heart felt like wood when praying. But this didn't prevent results, for Taylor reported that most of his major victories in China came from "emotionless prayer."

If we desire to pray like J. Hudson Taylor we, too, must be very cautious not to allow our emotions to cloud the picture. Soldiers cannot afford to let feelings



dictate their actions in battle. If only those who felt like fighting went to battle, little ground would be gained from the enemy. Victorious warriors are those who fight regardless of inward feelings or outward circumstances.

Problem Eight: The mystery of prayer.

There is in prayer a problem that might be labeled “the mystery of prayer.” To a degree, all answered prayer is a mystery. The French thinker Gabriel Marcel declared that a problem is something with which we can deal, something we can solve. We may not be able to solve it immediately, but in principle, we know a solution is possible. A mystery, on the other hand, is different. A mystery puts us in awe; we cannot “solve” it, we can only “accept” it and wonder at it. (3/97)

Those who give up praying because they do not understand this “gift of the bended knee” have failed to recognize that prayer itself is a mystery, something that “puts us in awe.” Unfortunately, there are some who demand a more complete explanation of a concept before accepting it. But when it comes to prayer, as David Hubbard relates, “We face a mystery.” He adds, “The sovereign God who directs the best things of men and of nations promises to hear and respond to our prayers. This remains a mystery because we are not completely sure how our prayers affect God’s sovereignty.” (4/14) To be sure, many of our problems with prayer would be solved if we accepted the fact that prayer is a mystery and its “whys” and “wherefores” belong to God.



Problem Nine: Praying aloud.

This problem, unlike most on our list, concerns a tangible aspect of prayer. The others have primarily centered on spiritual problems. This problem deals with the fear of praying aloud. It is especially prevalent in settings where believers are afraid their prayers might not be articulated in a manner acceptable to the group. They seem to forget the object of prayer is to talk with God as “a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11). Talking aloud in prayer is important because it makes our praying more personal, even if we are alone. It becomes like two friends talking over an intimate matter. Of course, the best way to overcome any such hesitancy is to practice praying aloud. Begin by finding just one person to pray with and start there.

Problem Ten: Failure to act.

Another problem in prayer develops when we neglect the necessary action that often must follow our praying. Charles Noble, once Dean of the Chapel at Syracuse University, tells of attending a boxing match with a Catholic priest. As the two fighters entered the ring, one of them crossed himself. Dr. Noble whispered to the priest, “Father, will that help?” The priest answered, “It will if he can fight!”

Prayer is never to be a substitute for action. It would be hypocrisy of the highest order if we hoarded massive funds in personal bank accounts and then prayed in public for world evangelism while giving little or nothing to help advance the cause. Real prayer demands action. In his book, *Why Prayers Are Unanswered*, John Lavender reminds us of Florence Nightingale who once asked, “What is the use of praying



to be delivered from ‘plague and pestilence’ so long as the common sewers are allowed to flow into the Thames River? If God sends a visitation of cholera, what would we conclude to be the most preferable reading of His mind—that He sends it in order that men might pray to Him for relief from it, or in order that they should themselves be driven to remove the predisposing causes?” (39/50)

Problem Eleven: Little recognition from others.

To the selfish person this problem is most serious. Little recognition awaits the man or woman who answers the call to prayer. Donald Demaray explains, “The training in prayer sometimes seems difficult because we are not recognized and appreciated. We like to be applauded—that is natural—and we like also to see results. But the work of intercession is largely a private affair: it is usually done in secret where people do not see us, and most will never know the hours of work invested.” (26/131)

Those who become involved in this mission of prayer must come to grips with its “behind the scenes” nature. Most of our efforts will be expended behind the closed doors of a lonely prayer closet, out of sight from others who labor more publicly in the harvest.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL FOUR

HINDRANCES IN PRAYER

In addition to the problems that make prayer difficult, we must not overlook those hindrances Satan uses to weaken our praying. A clear understanding of these hindrances should help students of prayer keep alert to these obstacles.

Hindrance One: A wrong motive.

James cautioned, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3, NIV). This serious hindrance to prayer involves petitioning God for things not really needed, with the purpose of satisfying selfish desires. It is praying with wrong motives. Scripture makes it clear that the goal of a life should be to glorify God. Paul says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV).

A sad example of “wrong motives” in our praying is the odd prayer offered several centuries ago by John Ward, a member of British Parliament. He prayed: “O Lord, Thou knowest that I have nine houses in the city of London, and that I have lately purchased an estate in Essex. I beseech Thee to preserve the two counties of Middlesex and Essex from fire and earthquakes. And as



I have also a mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg thee also to have an eye of compassion on that county, and for the rest of the counties. Thou mayest deal with them as Thou mayest. O Lord, enable the banks to answer all their bills, and make all the debtors good men. Give prosperous voyage and safe return to the Mermaid Sloop, because I have not insured it. And because Thou hath said, 'The days of the wicked are but short,' I trust Thee that Thou wilt not forget Thy promise, as I have an estate that I will inherit on the death of that poor profligate young man, Sir J. L. Preserve me from thieves and housebreakers, and make all my servants so honest and faithful that they may always attend to my interests, and never cheat me out of my property night or day." (14/25)

John Ward clearly missed the mark in understanding unselfish praying. True prayer must be free of self-want. Ravenhill writes, "If John Knox had prayed 'give me success' we would never have heard of him; but he prayed a self-purged prayer—'Give me Scotland or I die!'—and his prayer changed the pages of history. If David Livingstone had prayed that he might split Africa wide open, as proof of his indomitable spirit and skill with the sextant, his prayer would have died with the wind of the forest; but he prayed, 'Lord, when will the wound of this world's sin be healed?' Livingstone lived in prayer, and literally died upon his knees in prayer." (15/158)

Hindrance Two: Sin in our hearts.

A second hindrance to prayer is discussed by Isaiah: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2, NIV).



Here we see that sin raises an impenetrable barrier to answered prayer. In the case of Isaiah's generation their sinfulness made it impossible for God to respond. Willful sin will bring the same response from God concerning our praying. Even the smallest sin, when committed purposely, can wreak havoc with our prayers. Scientists tell us a small piece of lint or moisture from a fingerprint can cause a guided missile to miss its mark by hundreds of miles. In prayer, sin is equally devastating. The psalmist said: "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18, NIV). Thankfully, the psalmist concludes: "...but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer" (v. 19). In all this it is again necessary to highlight that the Psalmist uses the word "cherish" in regards to the sin in one's life. This does not mean if a believer commits a specific sin that God will refuse to listen, but rather if one cherishes sin in his or her life that such a one is in serious danger of not being heard in prayer. Keep in mind that "cherish" means "to hold dear" or "to keep or cultivate with care and affection." God will never reject a sincere sinner, even a repeat offender, who comes before Him in a true spirit of confession and repentance.

Hindrance Three: Idols in our lives.

The words of the prophet Ezekiel provide us a picture of this third hindrance: "Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of Man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?" (Ezekiel 14:1-3, NKJV).

The elders of Israel had come to Ezekiel for prayer. No doubt this action initially pleased the prophet



because he had longed for this kind of response to such spiritual matters. But God quickly made it plain that as long as the idols remained, He would not hear these people. His back is turned to such praying. God tells the prophet, "...anyone of the house of Israel, or the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from me and sets up idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity...I will set My face against that man...and I will cut him off from the midst of My people..." (Ezekiel 14:7-8, NKJV).

What exactly is an idol? It is anything man worships that is not God. It is related to the word "cherish" cited under our previous hindrance. It is also important to note that idols come in all shapes and sizes, and not just in a physical sense. Idolatry, as listed with the works of the flesh, means "thing worship" (Galatians 5:20). No place is to be given in our lives to harboring idols or "things" as a replacement to honoring God.

Hindrance Four: An unforgiving spirit.

Earlier we spoke of a "right spirit" in prayer. Here we wish to show that a "wrong spirit" seriously hinders prayer. Jesus made it clear that forgiveness and prayer are inseparable. He said, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins" (Mark 11:25, NIV).

Without a doubt an unforgiving spirit renders prayer of little effect. R. A. Torrey says, "All of God's answering our prayer is upon the basis of God's dealing with us as forgiven sinners, and God cannot deal with us as forgiven sinners while we are not forgiving those who have wronged us." (6/161)



Even the smallest hidden grudge can cause great damage to our prayer life, as Virginia Whitman relates. She tells of an incident that occurred years ago at Fairfax Airport in Kansas City when workers were constructing a proposed electrically perfect room. In this room mechanics were to work entirely protected from any electrical distractions. To make this possible, special construction techniques were employed in building the room. When the job was complete, however, a special electronic “reading” revealed a small amount of electrical conduction. After hours of searching, testing, and measuring with various special gauges, the trouble was discovered. The culprit was the lead pencil marks on the lumber placed by carpenters. The seemingly insignificant graphite in these marks rendered the room useless for its intended purpose. Mrs. Whitman concludes, “A suspicious thought, a critical one, an irritable, a condemning one, to say nothing of doubt, discouragement, or rebellion, may be the pencil mark that interferes with our contact with God.” (7/106)

Hindrance Five: Lack of generosity.

The Lord says plainly that “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered” (Proverbs 21:13, NIV). It is important that prayer warriors recognize the important place generosity plays in spiritual effectiveness. A refusal to help those in need (especially those in spiritual need both here and overseas), when we have the power to do so, is a hindrance to answered prayer. Little wonder much of our praying seems to go nowhere.

Addressing this subject, Dr. R. A. Torrey relates this sad account: “An enthusiastic missionary advocate at a well-known world missionary meeting at Rochester some



years ago, stretched out her hands to the audience in a pathetic appeal and said, 'Sisters we must have money for foreign missions,' and as she said it more than several thousand dollars worth of diamonds flashed on her fingers; and yet we wonder why God has not answered our prayers." (6/169) May God help us never to be more generous with ourselves than we are with a lost world. A spirit of generosity, indeed, is vital to powerful praying. Stinginess in doing our part stops God from doing His part.

Hindrance Six: Mistreatment of family members.

The hindrances presented in this Lecture Hall of this School of Prayer are not mere legalistic interpretations of narrow-minded Bible students. They are vital to answered prayer. This hindrance is no exception. The Bible says, "Husbands, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gifts of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (1 Peter 3:7, NIV). Here God informs us that improper treatment of a wife by a husband renders that person's praying ineffective. No doubt this caution could apply to all members of a family no matter their relationship. We are to respect and honor one another. Perhaps God included this thought in Scripture because He knew the majority of our time would be spent in family situations. God obviously knew that relationships at home would prepare us for relationships with the world. It is all too easy to put on a display of spirituality apart from the home, and then rarely manifest the same love and compassion in the home. God views this as unacceptable, for it is clearly a hypocrisy that results in ineffective praying.



Hindrance Seven: Unbelief.

Faith, as already observed, is vital to answered prayer. James refers to the “prayer of faith” as a kind of praying that produces results (James 5:15). Prayer absent of faith is prayer absent of power. Wise are the words, “Prayer doesn’t change things; believing prayer changes things.” Jesus repeatedly stressed the importance of faith as essential to overcoming the hindrance of unbelief.

Scripture well establishes this point: “According to your faith let it be to you” (Matthew 9:29, NKJV). “...if you have faith as a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20, NKJV). “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (Luke 7:50, NKJV). “...if you have faith and do not doubt...it will be done” (Matthew 21:21, NKJV). To Peter Jesus said, “I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Luke 22:32, NKJV).

Unbelief must be recognized as the ultimate enemy of answered prayer. Faith is the ultimate enemy of unbelief. We will possess either one or the other. Further, one’s faith will grow only in prayer and a regular study of God’s Word. As warriors on a mission of prayer into all the world, we must strive to develop those aspects of our personal devotion with God that increase our faith.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL FIVE

THE HIGHEST CALLING

Ministry gifts in the Body of Christ are varied in number and diverse in scope. We find on the list pastors, teachers, evangelists, ushers, worship leaders, choir directors, musicians, deacons, elders, cell group leaders, nursery attendants, youth leaders, custodians and a host of other classifications. Unfortunately, eliminated from most lists is the prayer warrior. Fortunately, some churches are changing this by appointing pastors of prayer. But on the whole, prayer is too often considered secondary in the ministry of the Church. I believe prayer is primary and, further, that those who give themselves to much prayer partake of the highest calling available on the list of ministries in the Church. In presenting this School of Prayer my desire is to join others in the Body of Christ who long to change this. We need many more intercessors who will give themselves, in some cases even full time, to a passionate fervency in prayer. J. C. Ryle agrees: “Many fall on their knees to say a form, but there are few who pray, few who cry unto God, few who call upon the Lord, few who seek as if they want to find, few who knock as if they hunger and thirst, few who wrestle, few who strive with God earnestly for an answer.” (44/2)

Luke’s account of Anna the prophetess provides an excellent example of this unique ministry of prayer



(Luke 2:36). Here we read of an 84-year-old saint giving herself to worship and prayer, with seasons of fasting day and night in the Temple. Prayer was not merely a part of Anna's life; it was her life. She lived to pray. Prayer was Anna's unique calling.

At Every Home for Christ we believe deeply in the ministry of prayer. Thousands of prayer partners have communicated that prayer for world evangelism is their primary focus in their praying. They are not called to preach, sing, teach or collect offerings. They pray. Some pray from dawn to dusk. Some of these are bedridden. Others are blind or deaf. Many are in good health, yet still give themselves to prolonged seasons of prayer. Some are young—though most are in mid- or later life. But they have chosen a challenge that many are too busy to embrace. They simply pray, and pray, and pray! Others may not be able to fulfill such an intensive calling at this season in their lives, yet they feel drawn to a greater depth in intercessory prayer and therefore devote times to daily prayer that often stretch an hour or more. Could the reason you are reading these words be that you feel something of this calling, even if you are far from where you would like to be in daily prayer? For the benefit of all students in the School of Prayer, whether novice or veteran, and whether one prays much or little, let's examine this exciting ministry in greater depth.

1. The ministry of prayer is the believer's chief ministry.

Christians are too often prone to view prayer as a ministry of last resort. I recall a friend in ministry sharing the sad story of a doctor telling a lady in his church that only prayer could save her dying husband. With tears the woman blurted out, "Oh God, has it come to that?"



Prayer is not the last of solutions, it is the best. The ministry of prayer is not a third-rate ministry. We see this fact born out of every major awakening in history. When word of the powerful 1857 revival in America spread to Ireland, Presbyterians sent a commission to America to carefully observe its causes. They brought back glowing reports of God's power being manifest across the Atlantic. People everywhere anxiously awaited a similar visitation throughout Ireland.

About this time four lone men gathered together in the little town of Kells, in Northern Ireland, where they banded themselves together each Saturday night for intense prayer. The whole night was given exclusively to seeking God for revival. After a time the four men attempted to go out preaching, but their attempts produced only failure. Back they went to praying, little realizing they had chosen the higher ministry calling. Not long after, a powerful revival hit their country. So extraordinary was the impact that courts adjourned for lack of cases to try. Jails were closed because all crime ceased. It was a lawman's utopia. Policemen had nothing to do so they formed quartets to sing in churches! It all happened when people recognized the power of this high calling of prayer.

2. The Ministry of Prayer is available to all.

No man, woman, boy or girl need feel unqualified for this wonderful ministry. Evangelist Torrey declared, "Prayer is one of the few universal privileges of mankind. There are no apartheid policies, caste systems, or minority group biases in the realm of prayer." (7/59) Indeed, one may be a poor singer, but he or she can pray. Such a one need not preach, if he or she can pray. Even the poorest, least gifted saint can pray. There is no



circumstance in which a Christian can find himself that rules out praying. Even those in pain can pray. Indeed, some of these make the best intercessors. Spurgeon preached, “God’s people have always in their worst condition found out the best of their God. He is good at all times; but He seemeth to be at His best when they are at their worst. Those who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls.” (34/7)

3. The Ministry of Prayer is to exist to pray.

Edward M. Bounds wrote pointedly on prayer because he practiced prayer. Of this powerful ministry he said, “Heaven will be fuller and brighter in glorious inhabitants, earth will be better prepared for its bridal day, and hell robbed of many of its victims, because we have lived to pray.” (20)

The anointed writer referred to those who have “lived to pray.” Upon arising each morning, these saints have one chief goal for the day—much time spent alone with God. Nations and people groups will be mentioned, by name, in their praying before evening. With careful intensity each request for prayer communicated to them for world evangelism or from nearby friends will be the object of much praying.

Imagine the joy these praying saints must bring to God. We are reminded of an elderly woman who lived alone. Without friends to fill the many empty hours, she became a “friend of God.” One day a rare visitor asked how she spent her time.

“Well,” the woman responded, “I begin my day by reading the Bible until I can’t read anymore.” She added, “Then, I pray until I can’t pray anymore. After



that I get a hymn book and sing until I can't sing anymore."

With a smile on her face the elderly saint concluded, "Then I just sit still for the rest of the day and let God love me." She had learned a vital secret to cultivating the ministry of prayer—spend much time letting God love you!

4. The Ministry of Prayer is hard work.

We have already suggested that prayer is work. Thus, "the ministry of prayer," as a calling, requires even harder work. Those responding to the call to share in this ministry must anticipate long days and sleepless nights. Ministering in prayer sometimes requires hours. Helen Shoemaker told of a woman in England who responded to this call. Many years previously, relates Mrs. Shoemaker, the woman had approached her bishop with a strange request. The bishop, like some other members of the clergy, was sometimes hesitant to hear another idea from an intercessor with odd ideas. However, something within him prompted him to listen. Her request was, indeed, unusual. She asked for permission to kneel in the crossing of the cathedral for three hours daily to offer special prayer for the unity of Christendom. After some thought, the bishop consented. Not long after the woman's daily prayer time began, over 200 interdenominational prayer groups were raised up under mysterious circumstances across England. It seemed thoroughly spontaneous. But Helen Shoemaker asked, "Is it possible that the great breakthrough taking place in communication between the different Christian denominations could go back to this faithful obedience and prayer on the part of these unknown individuals and groups?" (13/58,59)



If the answer to Mrs. Shoemaker's question is affirmative, it suggests that hard work and even long hours given to prayer are well spent. The ministry of prayer, though at times, demanding, produces much fruit.

5. The Ministry of Prayer is a gift.

This demanding, though gratifying ministry, is a specialized gift that must be treasured. It's a gift that cannot be cultivated in a hurried or distracting manner. What I call "highway praying" fits this category. It would include those Christians who say, "I have a prayer time every day. I pray in the car while driving on the freeway to work." True, prayer can be offered any place or time, and praying in the car, especially for those with long commutes, is a good thing. And what I share here is not meant to discourage those who do all they can just to maintain a minimal daily devotional habit. But the prayer ministry I speak of here requires solitude and focus. It is the cultivation of a gift for a specialized ministry. It is a life praying. As the Yoruba Christians in Africa express it, "Prayer is the gift of the knees."

The Ministry of Prayer: Historic Examples

A look at the lives of several "prayer giants" of the past who understood and cultivated this ministry of prayer should help all students of prayer better grasp these concepts. Our list could include many but we will highlight three who made a special mark in this regard.

1. David Brainerd.

A. J. Gordon gives an inspiring biographical account of David Brainerd that well illustrates the intensity of this unusual man, especially in his prayer



life. (5/134) Gordon writes, “In passing through North Hampton, Massachusetts, I went into the old cemetery, swept off the snow that lay on the top of the slab, and read these simple words: ‘Sacred to the memory of David Brainerd, the faithful and devoted missionary to the Susquehanna, Delaware and Stockbridge Indians of America, who died in this town, October 8, 1717.’” That was all there appeared on the slab in memory of a simple missionary to America’s Native Americans, a frail man who was only ordained four years prior to his untimely death at 29 years of age.

Gordon continued, “Now that great man did his greatest work by prayer. He was in the depth of those forests alone, unable to speak the language of the Indians, but he spent literally whole days in prayer. What was he praying for? He knew he could not reach these savages, for he did not understand their language. Even if he wanted to speak at all, he must first find somebody who could vaguely interpret his thoughts. Therefore, he knew that anything he could do must absolutely be dependent upon God. So he spent whole days praying, simply that the power of the Holy Ghost might come upon him so unmistakably that these people would not be able to stand before him.”

Pondering the success of this remarkable warrior, Gordon continues, “Once he preached through a drunken interpreter, a man so intoxicated that he could hardly stand up. This was the best he could do. Yet scores were converted through that sermon. We can account for it only that it was the tremendous power of God behind him.”

Concerning the impact of Brainerd’s life on others who read his diary, Dr. Gordon explains, “William Carey



read his life, and by its impact he went to India. Payson read it as a young man, only 20 years old, and he said that he had never been so impressed by anything in his life as by the story of Brainerd. Robert Murray McCheyne read it, and he likewise was impressed by it.” It is noteworthy to add here that each person Gordon mentions was a remarkable Christian leader in his own right.

A. J. Gordon continues, “But all I care is simply to enforce this thought, that the hidden life, a life whose days are spent in communion with God, in trying to reach the source of prayer, is the life that moves the world. Those living such lives may be soon forgotten. There may be no one to speak a eulogy over them when they are dead. The great world may take no account of them. But by and by, the great moving current of their lives will begin to tell, as in the case of this young man, who died at about 30 years of age. The missionary spirit of this century is due more to the prayers and consecration of this one man than to any other one.”

Dr. Gordon concludes his sketch, “Jonathan Edwards, who watched over him all those months while he was slowly dying of tuberculosis, did finally say, ‘I praise God that it was in His providence that he should die at my house, that I might hear his prayers, and that I might witness his consecration, and that I might be inspired by his example.’ When Jonathan Edwards wrote that great appeal to Christendom to unite in prayer for the conversion of the world, which has been the trumpet call of modern missions, undoubtedly it was inspired by this dying missionary.” (5/134)

David Brainerd was indeed a prince among praying leaders. He witnessed for Jesus, preached, taught, braved terrible snowstorms to spread the



Gospel—but most of all he prayed. Prayer was his life and life was his prayer. Friends say Brainerd prayed in snowdrifts until his body melted the snow to the ground. Little wonder he died so young. But who can calculate the impact of those prayers?

2. *Edward M. Bounds.*

W. H. Hodge provides an excellent biographical description of E. M. Bounds, a giant of prayer who was an attorney during the Civil War and who later wrote several classic books on prayer. Hodge explains, “I have been among many ministers and slept in the same room with them. They prayed, but I was never impressed with any special praying among them, until one day a small man with grey hair and an eye like an eagle came along.”

Occupying the same room with E. M. Bounds left a lasting impact on the young Hodge. He shares, “We had a 10-day convention. We had some fine preachers around the home, and he and one of them were assigned to my room. I was surprised early the next morning to see a man bathing and scrubbing himself before dawn and then to see him get down and begin to pray. I said to myself, ‘He will not disturb us, but will soon finish.’ He kept on softly for hours, interceding and weeping softly for me and my indifference, and for all the ministers of God.”

Bounds’ biographer continues: “He spoke the next day on prayer. I became interested, for I was young in the ministry, and had often desired to meet with a man of God that prayed like the saints of the apostolic age. Next morning he was up, praying again, and for 10 days he was up early, praying for hours. I became intensely interested and thanked God for sending him. ‘At last,’ I



said, 'I have found a man that really prays. I shall never let him go.'"

W. H. Hodge concludes his observations: "He drew me to him with hooks of steel; I entertained him, rose up with him, brought him to New York City at quite a cost of money to have him pray for my people and me. He was a great admirer of Brainerd. He would read his diary for hours and try to impress Brainerd's life on others. He remained two months with me in sweet fellowship and mighty prevailing prayer. On October 24, I took that dear, sweet, wrinkled face in my hands, and kissed him for the last time. That face lit up with the divinity of thought, those eyes gazing and peering into immensity—an eager man, an intense man—yes, one of God's eagles. I shall never see him again in this world; nor the likes of him, I fear." (1/18,19)

C. L. Chilton adds this further insight, "Edward Bounds did not merely pray well that he might write well about prayer. He prayed for long years upon subjects to which easygoing Christians rarely give a thought. He prayed for objects which men of less faith are ready to call impossible. Yet from these solitary prayer vigils, year by year there arose a gift of prayer-teaching equaled by few men. He wrote transcendently about prayer because he was transcendent in its practice." (5/145)

3. *John (Praying) Hyde.*

We must not exclude the humble missionary to India, John Hyde, from our short list of ministers of prayer. One biographer of Hyde told of a meeting in India they had attended together. Wrote the friend, "It was determined that prayer and not preaching should be recognized as the great channel of blessing. To this end



a prayer room was established as the powerhouse of the movement. Here, before the convention began, Hyde and his friends spent 30 days and 30 nights in prayer. And throughout the 10 days of the convention, Hyde really lived here.” (1/11)

Looking back at the impact of Hyde’s life, his biographer relates, “He spent most of the time on his face, for he felt he could never get low enough before God, pausing sometimes to take a little food and at times throwing himself down in a corner for a little sleep. He shunned publicity, but when he did speak, though his utterance was quiet, his words had a burning power. In the prayer room he obtained the tongue of fire.” (1/11)

Another friend said of this remarkable warrior, “Hyde paid a price for such prayer. Often he was ranked as a mad enthusiast, and considered as one who went much too far. He also paid the price in a short life for such agonizing prayer. But he has left a fragrance of life behind him that whenever the name is mentioned, we smell the sweetness of a life poured out before God for men.” (1/92) Late in life John Hyde’s health was failing and he finally visited a doctor. The doctor asked Hyde if he had been under severe distress because his heart had literally moved to the other side of his chest cavity. Hyde only smiled as the doctor insisted the intercessor stay in bed for a prolonged season of rest. But when the doctor left, John Hyde got out of bed and went back to his knees to intercede for the lost.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL SIX OUR MISSION AND CORPORATE PRAYER

There is a special place of power to be found in this ministry of prayer that deserves careful attention. It concerns corporate times of prayer. Early Church history makes it clear that “praying together” is of vital importance. For a thorough balance in this matter of prayer we will consider several facts about corporate prayer and the value of small group praying.

1. Scripture stresses the importance of corporate prayer.

Most of the meaningful Early Church encounters, as recorded in the Book of Acts, involved groups meeting for prayer. This historic New Testament narrative, in fact, begins with a description of group prayer that lasted 10 days, leading to an outpouring of God’s Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. (See Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4.) Later Luke writes, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31, NKJV). Corporate prayer, therefore, is not a modern innovation. As long as the Church has existed, praying together has been important.



2. History proves the power of corporate prayer.

Donald E. Demaray offers this evaluation: “No revival of religion has come in all the history of Christianity without group prayer.” (26/24) Backing this thought with the New Testament Scriptures cited above, we would have to agree. Demaray adds, “The Holy Club, which included George Whitefield and John Wesley, was a prelude to the [British] evangelical revival, which in turn was related to the great awakening in America.” (26/65)

3. Jesus promised His presence to those engaging in corporate prayer.

Christ, Himself, assured His disciples He would be with those who came together in prayer. He said, “Again I tell you, if only two of you on earth agree on what they pray for, they will get it from my Father in heaven. For whenever two or three have met as my disciples, I am right there with them” (Matthew 18:19, 20, Williams).

Here Jesus stresses the importance of united prayer, even if the number present is but two. Those, He says, who meet together in His name will encounter His presence. Further, they will find added power in their prayer as they agree together for personal needs. He says of agreement in prayer, “What they pray for, they will get!”

4. Harmony and unity often result from corporate prayer.

Note Matthew 18:19 and 20 in the Amplified Version of the New Testament. This translation, in amplifying the original Greek, records Jesus as saying, “If



two of you agree (harmonize together, together make a symphony) about—anything and everything—whatever they shall ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by My Father in heaven.”

Especially consider the two added expressions, “harmonize together” and “together make a symphony.” United praying is a beautiful symphony. It is the harmony of believers coming together in the Lord’s presence. In this sense corporate prayer both teaches and fosters unity in the Body of Christ.

5. Special spiritual power is generated through corporate prayer.

The Bible speaks of a time in Israel’s history when God promised: “Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand! All your enemies will fall beneath the blows of your weapons” (Leviticus 26:18, NLT).

Dr. Harold Lindsell, commenting on this verse, offers a spiritual theory he labels “The Law of Geometric Progression.” (27/109) According to Dr. Lindsell this law makes it possible for power in prayer to increase at a much greater rate as more people become involved in the praying. When our number increases from five to a hundred the increase in power is not twentyfold but a hundredfold. Thus, as we increase in number, and are clearly in harmony, our prayers increase almost geometrically in power.



6. Believers often hear God speak through corporate prayer.

Jo Kimmel advises, “God often speaks to people in a prayer group. For instance, the group grows quiet and waits in silence. As thoughts come to various ones, they are shared. The sharing may be a verse of Scripture, a line from a hymn, or a song someone starts and the rest join in on. Those in the group find God speaking to them and ministering to them through the others in the group.” (17/87)

Corporate prayer, then, is truly an excellent place to cultivate this important art of listening. In united prayer we also find the added advantage of hearing God speak through others, something not possible in personal prayer.

7. Prayer mobilization often is a result of corporate prayer.

An excellent by-product of united prayer is that it trains people in prayer as well as challenges them to mobilize others for this ministry. Everyone who believes in prayer should mobilize others for this high calling. A. J. Gordon declares, “To arouse one man or woman to the tremendous power of prayer for others is worth more than the combined activity of a score of average Christians. What David Brainerd did others may do. God is no respecter of persons.” (1/18) I am personally convinced that the reason God has allowed Every Home for Christ to have seen a harvest of more than 170 million followed up decisions and responses in its 70-year history, is because prayer mobilization has always been a number one priority.



In fact, the year I joined the staff (1976), founder Jack McAlister ran a five-hour television special in every major American, Canadian, and Australian TV market specifically devoted to mobilizing quarter hours of prayer for missions. At a cost in excess of many hundreds of thousands of dollars, Jack hosted the special, with challenging dramatic stories from throughout the world, and instead of asking for financial help as most specials would do, Jack asked only for prayer commitments. The following year decisions from EHC's home-to-home evangelism campaigns increased by more than 400 percent over the previous year, although literature distribution remained almost the same. To Jack, this was akin to scientific proof that prayer mobilization makes a remarkable difference in the global harvest.

A chief means to help mobilize prayer warriors, of course, is to get them involved in a prayer group. W. E. Sangster says, "The gates of hell prevail against us for lack of prayer, the Kingdom is impeded in its coming for the lack of prayer. You could be of service to God, to the nation, and to the world, if you would form, or help form, a prayer cell. It might be the most useful thing you have done in your life." (1/66) Indeed, a key purpose of this School of Prayer is to train mobilizers of prayer who have first cultivated a life of prayer.



Organizing a Prayer Group

To help you organize an effective prayer group, several factors should be considered:

1. *Strive to create unity in Jesus.*

Helen Smith Shoemaker, in *The Secret of Effective Prayer*, explains, “Group prayer sets up a positive chain reaction of which no one can foresee the end.” (13/144) In helping establish a prayer group, as Mrs. Shoemaker explains, we are doing our “small share in fulfilling Jesus’ vision: ‘That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me’” (John 17:21).

It was the author’s late husband, Sam Shoemaker, who said, “A prayer group could best be defined as an organic association with other people whose center is Christ—a living organism and not an organization in the ordinary sense of the word.” (13/153) The Quakers had an excellent expression for just such a gathering. They called it “The Fellowship of the Concerned.”

2. *Have a prayer list prepared.*

Although you will want to remain open to the Holy Spirit guiding your times of corporate prayer, it is helpful to prepare a meaningful prayer list in advance to help you focus prayer on a lost world. Various organizations like Every Home for Christ prepare monthly “31-day prayer guides” to help believers focus prayer on specific world needs. Many church denominations also print monthly magazines that include specific prayer needs. Church bulletins and even the front page of your local



newspaper can provide good additions to a prayer list. Of course, if your gathering includes more seasoned intercessors, they will certainly be guided into many focuses of prayer as your meeting progresses.

3. *Pray conversationally.*

Insights have previously been shared concerning conversational prayer, though our emphasis was on praying conversationally when alone. Here we wish to stress its importance in group prayer. Basically, conversational prayer in groups, as suggested by Rosalind Rinker, is to teach group participants to pray in the same manner in which they might converse with one another. When one has prayed in this manner about a specific concern, another in the group takes that same request and prays conversationally for it in a similar fashion. As many as feel led by the Holy Spirit might pray for this same person or need until it seems appropriate to advance to another need. This continues until the prayer time ends naturally.

Conversational prayer, as used in the above manner, helps eliminate the need for sharing lengthy prayer requests, thus allowing participants to get directly to the business of prayer. In fact, it's a good practice to go right to prayer in a group setting, by encouraging members to pray their requests rather than speak them first. This is healthy because, as one writer suggests, "Talk often becomes a substitute for prayer. Even in prayer meetings we often spend more time talking about our problems than praying over them." (4/10) Sharing further on this subject, Rosalind Rinker adds, "Praying conversationally [i.e., praying back and forth on a single subject until a new one is introduced by the Holy Spirit] makes such a natural means of 'spiritual togetherness'



that the healing love of God touches us all as we are in His presence.” (38/7,8)

4. *Never allow criticism.*

All matters of prayer or discussion prior to, during, and after a group prayer meeting should be kept positive. Criticism must never be a focal point of any corporate prayer gathering. Professor Hallesby concedes, “It is easy to criticize leaders. After the thing is done, everybody is wise. We all see how it should have been done. Beforehand nobody sees what ought to be done, but that is just when leaders must act. Let us pray for our leaders at all times instead of constantly criticizing them.” (2/72)

The purpose of a prayer group is prayer, not evaluation or discussion of problems in a local church or with certain believers. Torrey explains, “Oh, if we would talk less to one another against our ministers and more to God on their behalf, we would have far better ministers than we have now.” (6/35) This is not to say we should refrain from praying for serious needs in our communities, families or churches that may be unpleasant or indicators of obvious sin. Intercessors sometimes have to deal with messy issues in prayer. Yet, we need to carefully guard our praying so it doesn’t become an occasion to verbalize past grudges or disappointments with others.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL SEVEN

THE CHURCH AND PRAYER

Vitally important to the strength of our prayer mission is a praying church. If this vital mission is to have far-reaching impact throughout the world, the Church, by which we particularly mean the local church, must be drawn back to its knees. Only a praying church can impact a dying world. Following are several premises concerning a church that prays:

1. A praying church will resist the attacks of Satan.

Dwight L. Moody's fellow evangelist, R. A. Torrey, once preached, "Praying will do more to make the Church what it ought to be than anything else we can do. Prayer will do more to root out heresy than all the heresy trials ever held. Prayer will do more to straighten out tangles and misunderstandings and unhappy complications in the life of a church than all the counsels and conferences ever held. Prayer will do more to bring a deep and lasting and sweeping revival, a revival that is real and lasting and altogether of the right sort, than all the organizations ever devised by man." (6/42,43)

The late evangelist's evaluation is even truer today. It is prayer that prepares the local church for warfare, just as prayer prepares individual believers for satanic attacks. Surely we need much prayer to "straighten out



tangles and misunderstandings.” People who spend most of their time fighting each other certainly will find little time to fight Satan.

2. A praying church produces holy, praying members.

Someone has said that a product reflects and partakes of the character of its manufacturer. Hence, a righteous praying church produces righteous praying men. A church that has no program of prayer certainly will not produce people of prayer. Praying Christians are no accident. Likewise, a church that has no standards of holiness will be unable to produce believers with standards of holiness. Thus, we must evaluate where our particular church stands in these matters and set higher goals of commitment and dedication.

3. A praying church controls the destiny of nations from its prayer room.

The “high council chamber” for world evangelization is not a strategy room hidden in some executive office building, filled with maps and charts of the world’s people groups and populations. These may be of value in time to help map out a strategy for a specific evangelism campaign, but this is not the real place of planning with power. Plans that really transform people and nations come through prayer. Dr. Hallesby explains, “In prayer the churches receive the power to rule the world. The Church is always the little flock. But if it would stand together on its knees, it would dominate world politics—from the prayer room.” (2/158)

Here is a truth too seldom put into practice. Many local churches lack a designated place exclusively for prayer. We miss the great point of the transforming



power of local church prayer. Indeed, the church stands tallest on its knees. It wars mightiest on its face. It advances farthest through its intercession. Our real power as a corporate body is in local church prayer rooms where intercession rises day and night. If we will pay the price, we who follow Jesus can dictate the destinies of men and nations from the prayer room.

4. A praying church will help create a praying nation.

Even a single praying church can do much to bring about lasting revival, not only to a nation but the world. Every major revival in history obviously began in a specific location. Seldom do we hear of revival exploding throughout a geographical place, simultaneously, all at once. Whole countries are not saved in an afternoon. Souls are reached one at a time. Revival comes in the same way, to one church at a time, as congregations respond. Samuel Chadwick preached, “Nothing would turn the nation back to God so surely and so quickly as a church that prayed and prevailed. The world will never believe in a religion in which there is no supernatural power. A rationalized faith, a socialized church, and a moralized gospel may gain applause, but they awaken no conviction and win no converts.” (26/88)

Growth Steps for Praying Churches

The Church globally is much more than an institution or a denomination—it is the Body of Christ. Yet, Christ’s Body has many members, or organizations, working together to accomplish the task of world evangelization and national transformation. The local church is especially vital in this effort of worldwide transformation. Thus, it is essential that believers in each local church mature so their local church matures. As



people of a church grow, the church itself grows, and as a church grows, its outreach locally and globally grows. To bring about this process of growth, however, there are several “growth steps” each local church must consider.

GROWTH STEP ONE: *For the Church to grow it must elevate prayer above all other programs.*

Most churches have many types of organized programs but too few have a meaningful program of prayer. William Evans says, “It would be easier to conceive of a city without electricity, transportation, telephone service, water, and police protection, than it would to conceive of the Church without prayer. Yet, the unhappy truth is that many churches have ‘supper rooms’ for eating and drinking, but no ‘upper rooms’ for prayer and waiting on God.” (27/13)

If a church is to grow with true spiritual depth, it needs a special department of prayer, fully organized, to carry out this important aspect of spiritual life. Just as a church has its youth program, Sunday school activities, ministries to men and women, and a music department, it needs a well-ordered program of prayer. The devil fears this more than all the other programs combined.

Dr. Torrey said it bluntly, “The devil is perfectly willing that the Church should multiply its organizations and its deftly-contrived machinery for the conquest of the world for Christ, if it will only give up praying.” (12/59)

Torrey adds, “Satan laughs softly, as he looks at the Church today, and says under his breath: ‘You can have your Sunday schools, your YMCAs, and your YWCAs, and your YPSCBs and BYPUSs, and your



Epworth Leagues, and your WCTUs and your Boys' Brigades and your Institutional Churches, and your men's clubs, and your grand choirs, and your fine organs, and your brilliant preachers, and your revival efforts, as long as you do not bring into them the power of Almighty God, sought and obtained by earnest, persistent, believing, mighty prayer." (12/59)

Today, most would have little idea of the organizations Torrey was thinking of as he listed some of his acronyms, but that which was birthed in prayer from Torrey's day still impacts the world. Indeed, the Bible institute Torrey founded several generations ago as The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (with its own acronym, BIOLA), is today one of America's great evangelical institutions, Biola University.

GROWTH STEP TWO: For the Church to grow its members must pray for its pastor.

Sadly, many churches have seen little appreciable growth in years. A multitude of congregations are hopelessly divided as criticism and doctrinal disputes abound. Usually this criticism ends up at the door of the pastor's study. "If church membership declines, it must be the poor preaching," some rationalize. In reality, all lack of growth can be blamed on lack of prayer. Citing Torrey again, "Any church may have a mighty man of God for its pastor, if it is willing to pay the price, and that price is not a big salary but great praying." (6/34)

The place to begin in a quest for church growth is the church prayer room, and a key focus of that prayer should be the pastor. No prayer warrior in the pew can possibly imagine the potential "powerhouse" standing in the pulpit. He or she may simply need more prayer.



GROWTH STEP THREE: *For the Church to grow its leadership must pray.*

It is not enough that a church's membership prays. Rarely will one find a church whose members pray if its leadership doesn't. Further, leaders cannot afford to wait for their congregations to begin praying before they personally give themselves to prayer. Sheep follow shepherds. This not only applies to pastors, but to all leaders in the church, including lay leaders. John R. Mott declares, "The plea and purpose of the Apostles was to put the Church to praying. I used to lay down a great many points on how to get people to pray, but I made up my mind that the only way to get them to do it is to do it myself." (1/20) To this, E. M. Bounds adds, "The Church never will be wholly for God until the pews are filled with praying men. The Church cannot be what God wants it to be until those of its members who are leaders in business, politics, law and society, are leaders in prayer." (5/67) Of course, the one person who must get the ball rolling if a church is to be a praying church is the pastor, and for this reason we set aside a moment in our study to speak specifically to those with this calling.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL EIGHT

THE PASTOR AND PRAYER

Every pastor plays an especially vital role in world evangelization and transformation because of his or her potential for the mobilization of prayer warriors from the pulpit. Previously we stressed the importance of all Christians mobilizing praying friends. Here we challenge pastors to get involved. E. M. Bounds declared, “The reformer is one who, with clarion voice, will call the ministry back to its knees.” (5/82)

This business of prayer mobilization ought to be given the highest priority by pastors everywhere. Ravenhill preached, “The man who can get believers to praying would, under God, usher in the greatest revival that the world has ever known.” (9/29) Andrew Murray, the noted missionary-statesman adds, “The man who mobilizes the Christian Church to pray, will make the greatest contribution in history to world evangelization.”

Since only a pastor who personally prays will mobilize others to pray, it is vital that pastors understand the necessity of devotional prayer. Note these essential reasons why a personal, systematic prayer life is vital for every pastor:



1. The pastor's prayer life is vital in changing lives.

It is said of Augustus Caesar that he found Rome a city of wood and left it a city of marble. Alluding to this statement, E. M. Bounds declares, "The pastor who succeeds in changing his people from a prayerless to a prayerful church, has done a greater work than did Augustus in changing a city from wood to marble." (21)

To be sure, the pastor's prayer life is especially vital because it sets an example to Christians under his charge. As the pastor prays, so pray his people.

2. The pastor's prayer life is vital to church revival.

Rarely has there been a revival in history where the pastoral leadership failed to pray. Even revival in the Early Church was sparked by leaders who prayed. Prayer was the key to the successful reports we find throughout the Book of Acts. "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47, NKJV); "...many of those who heard the Word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand" (Acts 4:4, NKJV); and, "And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (Acts 5:14, NKJV). I believe the success of the Early Church in reaching the lost can be traced to a lone verse: "...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4, NKJV).

3. The pastor's prayer life is vital to sermon preparation.

Will Houghton shared this sad evaluation of much modern preaching: "The tragedy is that so many are technically correct and yet spiritually powerless." (30/4)



Charles Spurgeon, whose sermons were vastly different from Will Houghton's description, learned the key to effective preaching. He explained, "You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayers. Thoughts and reasonings may be like the steel wedges which may open a way into truth; but prayer is the lever, the pry which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure that is hidden therein for those who can forge their way to reach it." (34/14)

It is during prayer that God will open our minds to the themes He wants preached. When we receive a message in prayer, we usually preach it with much greater conviction. We have that inner sense that God has given it to us personally and this adds confidence to our preaching.

Prayer, indeed, is far more important to preaching than natural ability. This is obvious from looking at those preachers of the past who, quite apart from any great ability, saw life-changing results because their messages came through prayer. Jonathan Edwards, as cited earlier, wore thick glasses and preached in a monotone, and yet grown men cried out as they grabbed the pillars of a New England church, afraid they might slip into hell that very moment. Using awkward gestures, Edwards usually held his sermon notes mere inches from his face and read every word. But he spent whole days and even weeks in prayer. It was not unusual for Edwards to pray 18 hours prior to preaching a single sermon. Little wonder God allowed Jonathan Edwards to hold a vital key to open the windows of heaven, releasing one of America's greatest awakenings!



4. The pastor's prayer life is vital to his own spiritual growth.

It is well stated that when a pastor moves forward he creates behind him a vacuum. People standing in the wake will quickly follow. The farther the pastor goes the farther his people will go. If he moves toward higher spiritual ground others will soon join him.

Leaders in the pulpit, of course, have one disadvantage compared with those in the pew. The latter can come to be fed but the pastor must be disciplined to feed himself.

E. M. Goulburn shares this insight, "It is in the nature of the flame to burn away the oil by which it is fed. Pastor, if you have spent a busy day in God's service and in works of love—if you have stood in the breach, and made a manful protest against worldly sentiments, practices, maxims—if you have run hither and thither on the errand of mercy to the poor, the sick, the dying—if your hands have been busy on some work whereby the truth of God may be maintained and His glory and the interest of His Church subserved: this is all good, so far as it goes, and a subject of devout thankfulness; but still it is external work, and in being external, it necessarily makes a demand upon, and consumes the powers of the inner life. It is all an outgoing of oil; and if there be no incoming thereof, the flame will not burn long." (1/124) Prayer and meditation to the pastor are the best means of replenishing this oil. Only in spending much time alone with God, in prayer and in God's Word, will such a one grow as necessary to lead others.



Challenges for Power

Before leaving this pastoral discussion we include several challenges to each pastor, personally, concerning this vital area of prayer. In light of these thoughts, evaluate your present spiritual position in relationship to where you feel God would have you to be.

1. Give much time to prayer.

We recall how Martin Luther declared he had so much work to do that he must spend three hours in prayer every day if he hoped to accomplish it. Luther knew that much time spent in prayer would clear his thoughts and help him make better use of his time. W. E. Sangster adds, "Give up work if need be: your influence finally depends upon your firsthand knowledge of the unseen world." (26/137)

Truly, the secret of spiritual leaders who accomplished much for God in times past was their prayer life. It was not haphazard, but generally well-organized and frequently intense. Often many hours were spent before God. Speaking of these individuals, Bounds writes, "Their hearts were after God, their desires were on Him, their prayers were addressed to Him. They communed with Him, sought nothing of the world, sought great things of God, wrestled with Him, conquered all opposing forces, and opened up the channel of faith deep and broad between them and heaven. And all this was done by the use of prayer." (5/43) The wise writer added, "No man can do a great and enduring work for God who is not a man of prayer, and no man can be a man of prayer who does not give much time to praying." (1/53)



2. Let each prayer time be a motive-cleansing time.

Too much praying nowadays is clouded with man's desire. Ego has no place in the prayer closet. Ravenhill warned, "Oh! My ministering brethren! Much of our praying is but giving God advice! Our praying is discolored with ambition, either for ourselves or for our denomination. Perish the thought! Our goal must be God alone. It is His honor that is sullied, His blessed Son who is ignored, His law is broken, His Name profaned, His Book forgotten, His house made a circus of social efforts." (15/28)

Beloved leader, rather than allowing prayer to be a place of demands let it be a place of cleansing. Let our prayer be a time where motives are examined and evaluated in the light of the cross. Ask this question often: will my prayer, if answered, bring glory to Jesus?

3. Set aside time for an annual or quarterly prayer retreat.

It was not unusual for Jesus to set aside time to be alone with God. Paul even went to the desert for several years early in his ministry. And though we may not be able to follow the example of Paul, we surely ought to follow the example of Jesus. Perhaps we could set aside several days annually for nothing but prayer. Ravenhill declares, "Let any man shut himself up for a week with only bread and water, with no books except the Bible, with no visitor except the Holy Ghost, and I guarantee my brethren, that that man will either break up or break through and out. After that, like Paul, he will be known in hell!" (15/106)



4. Give special attention to meditation and contemplation.

Attention to the subject of meditation and contemplation has been given previously in our study though we in positions of spiritual leadership need to be reminded especially of its necessity and power. Oliver G. Wilson explains, “Sainthood is produced by long hours in meditating upon God. It takes some time spent alone with the eternal to learn His secrets. Wait upon God; continue to look into His face if you would become like Him.” (1/64) The Bible says, “Be still and know...” (Psalm 46:10). As a wise friend told me on more than one occasion, “You never really know until you are very still.”

5. Preach often on the subject of prayer.

Though prayer is taught best by example and understood by experience, Christians need training and inspiration in this matter. We must stress the need for prayer as much as other themes on spiritual maturity. Charles Finney explains, “Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival; as much so as truth is. Some have zealously used truth to convert men, and laid very little stress on prayer. They have preached, and talked, and distributed tracts with great zeal, and then wondered that they had so little success. And the reason was, they forgot to use the other branch of the means, effectual prayer. They overlooked the fact that truth by itself will never produce the effect, without the Spirit of God.” (1/120)

To lay stress on this matter of prayer, leaders must highlight it more. If prayer is as vital to Christian growth as we suggest, it is essential that sermon calendars include frequent notations to preach or teach on this important theme.



Lecture Hall Four

STUDY HALL NINE

THE FAMILY AND PRAYER

The basic unit of fellowship in the Church is the family. Spiritually speaking, the family is an important place for teaching on the importance of our prayer mission to the world. Helen Shoemaker suggests that each family is like a small orchestra. It needs a conductor who will see that each instrument is kept tuned and played in harmony with every other instrument. Only a “well-tuned” family will make harmonious sounds within its walls that will carry out through the doors to the community. Our Father in heaven, of course, is the only one consistent and authoritative enough to conduct a family orchestra. And we allow Him to do just this when we have family prayer. (13/122) To help heads of families in this matter we offer a few suggestions.

1. Set aside a daily family prayer time.

It is important to understand that “family prayer” sets our standard for “family living.” This is why it is important that we “make” time daily to be alone with God as a family. Donald Demaray shares this insight, “Family prayer does not take place in a vacuum; it flows out of a way of family living, indeed it is a way of living.” (26/108)



2. Train your children to pray.

Early years of childhood are, without question, years in which entire personalities are developed. Scripture declares, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). This principle may be applied to prayer as to any matter of training. Over a century ago Horace Bushnell advised, “Let every mother and father realize that when their child is three years of age, they will have done more than half they will ever do for that child’s character.” (26/114) Let prayer be well taught to our children before they reach the age of three. In doing this a seed of power will be planted for a lifetime.

3. Pray often for your children.

The most important thing parents could ever do for their children is to pray for and with them. Nothing is more important to their spiritual development. One excellent time for such prayer, especially for young children, is during late hours when they are asleep. Indeed, the mother who kneels at the foot of a bed praying love-filled prayers for her children will live to see “fruit that remains” in the years ahead. Professor Hallesby declares, “My friend, if you are not able to leave your children a legacy in the form of goods, do not worry about that. And do not worry yourself to death either physically or spiritually in order to accumulate a great deal of property for your children; but see to it, night and day, that you pray for them. Then you will leave them a great legacy of answers to prayer, which will follow them all the days of their life.” (2/174)



4. *Expect results from family prayer.*

Once a family begins praying together they can expect visible results. Some of these may be apparent within days of beginning a family altar. Helen Shoemaker suggests that three results in particular can be expected.

First, people who pray together will begin to see others with new eyes. We will recognize other members of our family have needs and problems. Praying together will bring this out.

The second positive result of family prayer will be the sense of common purpose produced. Praying together helps set goals as a family. Along with this, character is being developed in those who do the praying. As a family prays together, they mature together.

Finally, family prayer helps develop a sense of world citizenship in prayer. Mrs. Shoemaker points out that in family prayer we learn to work creatively, and as a team, to help meet human need. In family prayer we can keep before us the daily needs of a lost world.



Lecture Hall Four

MISSION SUMMARY

EMBRACING YOUR PRAYER CALLING

Regardless of the level your praying may presently attain, it is certain that those who pursue a depth in prayer will eventually become intercessors. These are those who become increasingly consumed with praying for others as well as the challenges of world evangelization. In this regard there is an interesting picture of the power of such praying intercessors in Christ's revelation to the Apostle John. It concerns the unusual season of silence described in Revelation 8:1. Writer Walter Wink offers his explanation of this silence and in so doing provides one of the most provocative statements regarding the power of those who embrace the calling of an intercessor. Wink states:

“Heaven itself falls silent. The heavenly hosts and celestial spheres suspend their ceaseless singing so that the prayers of the saints on earth can be heard. The seven angels of destiny cannot blow the signal of the next times to be until an eighth angel gathers these prayers...and mingles them with incense upon the altar. Silently they rise to the nostrils of God.

“Human beings have intervened in the heavenly liturgy. The uninterrupted flow of consequences is dammed for a moment. New



alternatives become feasible. The unexpected becomes suddenly possible, because God's people on earth have invoked heaven, the home of the possibles, and have been heard. What happens next happens because people prayed. The message is clear: *history belongs to the intercessors.*" (Walter Wink, *History Belongs to the Intercessor*, Sojourners, 1990.)

It is only after the smoke of the incense, a biblical symbol of worship, is combined with the prayers (intercessions) of all the saints (Revelation 8:4), that the angel takes the censer, fills it with fire and casts it upon the earth. Thus, as the result of the prayers of God's people, saturated with much worship, the seven angels are then permitted to sound their trumpets. They progress in their assignments until the final trumpet heralds the fullness of Christ's coming kingdom (Revelation 11:15) along with the accompanying cleansing of the heavenlies of demonic forces as described in Revelation 12:7-11. But this only happens after the release of the prayers of God's people at His throne. History, indeed, belongs to the intercessor.





CHAPTER 5

Lecture Hall Five

THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S
PRAYER PROGRAM

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Lecture Hall Five

STUDY HALL ONE

THE HABIT OF PRAYER

“It is quite natural and inevitable,” wrote Dean Inge, “that if we spend 16 hours daily of our waking life in thinking about the affairs of the world, and five minutes in thinking about God...this world will seem 200 times more real to us than God.” (26/84)

Indeed, the problem with the average Christian’s prayer life is that it lacks consistency. Many have no prayer life at all. Yet, a look at Scripture reveals that a prayer habit is essential to power with God. As emphasized earlier, Jesus often sought solitude in the hills surrounding Jerusalem for the purpose of prayer. Abraham arose in the morning and went to “the place where he stood before the Lord.” Daniel prayed three times a day in a chamber with a window facing Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10). All of these had a special prayer habit. David, too, offered prayer on several occasions daily. The latter said, “Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17, NKJV). Many believers would be surprised at how easy it is to develop such habits of prayer that often last a lifetime.

Developing an effective prayer habit is the subject of this Lecture Hall in this School of Prayer. Here are several results one might expect from a consistent daily habit of prayer.



1. A daily prayer habit will make us more like Jesus.

It is not unusual to hear of a husband and wife who take on one another's characteristics after years of a close relationship. Their marriage has become a molding of two personalities. Each becomes like the other. Even facial characteristics may seem similar. All this occurs because of a close, intimate association over many years. A similar thing happens when a Christian develops a consistent prayer habit. Continual association with Christ, through prayer and a study of His Word, will cause a believer to think and act more like Jesus. Before long, people will be able to "see Jesus" in the person who spends much time with Him. And it all begins with daily, intimate communion with Christ.

2. A daily prayer habit will lead us to glimpse God's glory.

Jonathan Edwards relates an account that suggests a special benefit derived from daily, consistent prayer. Edwards writes, "Once I rode out in the woods for my health, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner has been to walk for divine contemplation and prayer. I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God as mediator through God and man, and of His wonderful, great, full, pure, and sweet grace and love, and His meek and gentle condescension. The grace that seems so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception, which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour. It kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and



annihilated, to lie in the dust; to be full of Christ alone, to love Him with my whole heart.” (5/143)

In reading Jonathan Edwards’ meaningful description we especially highlight two expressions. First, he went to “a retired place.” It appears that Edwards had a special place where he went for prayer.

A second significant phrase in Edwards’ description is his expression “as my manner has been.” It is rather obvious that Jonathan Edwards had a habit of prayer. Certainly this is the reason why he was privileged to catch a glimpse of God’s glory.

3. A daily prayer habit will nourish one’s spirit.

In the same manner that our physical body needs tangible food, our spiritual body needs spiritual food. If deprived of food and water for a long period of time, the body will die. So it is with the spiritual man. E. M. Bounds explains, “As every day demands its daily bread, so every day demands its prayer. No amount of praying done today will suffice for tomorrow’s praying. We cannot have tomorrow’s grace, we cannot eat tomorrow’s bread, and we cannot do tomorrow’s praying.” (21)

Prayer brings the daily allowance of spiritual calories needed to sustain our spiritual walk. When a new day dawns, our spirit requires a fresh supply of energy. Thirty minutes of prayer on the first day of the month cannot be expected to supply a full month’s need for spiritual food any more than eating a steak dinner at the beginning of the month will meet our physical needs for the remainder of the month. Daily prayer supplies daily spiritual food, a must for those followers of Christ who wish to grow in Him.



4. A daily prayer habit releases rivers of blessings to others.

A daily habit of prayer goes beyond merely affecting the person who does the praying. Entering the closet of quiet prayer and meditation prepares us to be better listeners when we leave that place of prayer. We become like Plynlimon, the historic mountain in Wales that Gregory Mantle uses as an example of what happens when we spend much time in prayer. For centuries, Mantle confides, the mountain has been “drinking from every cloud that has settled upon its head, until it has become a great reservoir, and from it today there flow five rivers.” Gregory Mantle concludes, “If we drink from the Invisible and the Eternal, there will flow from us rivers of blessings, fertilizing, gladdening, and blessing all around.” (1/66) Consistent prayer, indeed, makes the praying Christian a consistent blessing to others.

5. A daily prayer habit will teach us wise use of time.

Previously we stressed the importance of using time wisely to enhance self-development and spiritual growth. Daily prayer, systematic and consistent, is an excellent school in which to learn time’s value. Sundar Singh says, “Prayer saves time. On the mountains, torrents flow right along, cutting their own courses. But on the plains canals have to be dug out painfully by men so that the water might flow. So among those who live on the heights with God, the Holy Spirit makes its way through of its own accord, whereas those who devote little time to prayer and communion with God have to organize painfully.” (1/70)



Prayer, in the truest sense, does not really take time, it saves time. During the time we spend with God in prayer, He will reveal unique secrets on how to save time throughout the remainder of the day. In fact, the best time to plan an “order of the day” is in prayer. God will make it possible to plan the day in such a way as to multiply the effectiveness of every hour.



Lecture Hall Five

STUDY HALL TWO

GOOD HABITS TO DEVELOP

From our earliest days in elementary school we are taught good habits; wash your hands, clean up the waste paper, be on time, and the like. Here are several good habits to develop for proper growth in this all-important School of Prayer.

1. Learn to acknowledge God immediately upon rising.

Every Christian should develop a habit of thinking about God as soon as he awakens in the morning, even before he gets out of bed. We recall the Psalmist's words, "...When I awake, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see you face to face" (Psalm 17:15, NLT). This allows the believer to recognize God at the very beginning of the day, before all other activities begin. It involves setting apart that day for God. Joseph Parker says, "Blessed is the day whose morning is sanctified. Successful is the day whose first victory is won by prayer. Holy is the day whose dawn finds thee on the top of the mount! Health is established in the morning. Wealth is won in the morning. The light is brightest in the morning." (1/19)

2. Make specific time for prayer daily.

Stressing the importance of finding time for prayer, S. D. Gordon wisely suggests, "We need time for prayer,



unhurried time, daily time, time enough to forget about how much time it is. I do not mean rising in the morning at the very last moment and dressing rather hurriedly, and then kneeling for a few moments so as to feel easier in mind: not that. I do not mean the last thing at night when you are jaded and fagged and almost between the sheets, and then remember to look up a verse and kneel a moment: not that.” (1/52)

The kind of praying S. D. Gordon describes above might be termed “accidental prayer.” If one does squeeze in time for prayer, it’s usually quite by accident. The solution to this whole dilemma is to make time for prayer. Simply stated, the one who does not make time for prayer will never find time to pray. There are 96 15-minute time periods that make up every day. Surely every believer in love with Jesus could set aside one, two, or even four 15-minute periods a day to be with Him in prayer and the reading of God’s Word.

3. Use a prayer list and a world map to strengthen your prayers.

A key to powerful praying is the use of a prayer list and a map of the world. Using such “tools” keeps before the intercessor specific needs that help him or her pray intelligently. In the previous Lecture Hall (chapter 4), in discussing major areas on which to focus prayer, keeping an up-to-date prayer list was suggested. The student of prayer may wish to abbreviate that list and tack it to the wall of his prayer closet or keep it in his or her Bible. The Every Home for Christ World Prayer Map also is helpful. It includes a listing of every nation in a 31-day calendar form for systematic prayer. (Visit EHC’s website—www.ehc.org—for information on obtaining copies.) It is clearly a weak thing to pray, “God bless the world



today,” in comparison to praying for several nations a day, by name so that each month the intercessor travels in prayer to every nation on earth. The latter adds an entirely new dimension to prayer. As you pray for the world, God’s love for the world will fill your heart.

4. The spirit of prayer should not end with our time spent in the closet of prayer.

Andrew Bonar, that great prayer warrior of a previous generation, saw this danger. He wrote in his diary, “I see that unless I keep up short prayers every day throughout the whole day, at intervals, I lose the spirit of prayer. Too much work without corresponding prayer. Today I am setting myself to pray...passed six hours today in prayer and Scripture reading, confessing sin, and seeking a blessing for myself and the parish.” (1/85)

Andrew Bonar had learned the importance of maintaining a “spirit of prayer” throughout the day. This is to carry an attitude of prayer into all we do. “Pray without ceasing,” the apostle told a struggling Church (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The New Testament Greek word for “without ceasing” is the exact equivalent of the word “hacking” as used to describe one who has “a hacking cough.” It means something that is spontaneous, always happening.

5. Spend enough time praying to truly meet God.

Scientists sometimes work for years to uncover a single new truth. Thomas Edison performed 10,000 different experiments on a storage battery before a working model was produced. They say the inventor sometimes slept only two hours a night. Jonas Salk struggled in a lab for years before discovering a vaccine



for polio. Yet, many Christians expect to know Christ intimately without ever spending much time alone with Him in prayer. They fail to realize our relationship with God in the spiritual realm is much like our relationship with people about us in the natural realm. A husband will never really know his wife if he never talks to her. A child cannot know a father intimately who leaves for work before the child rises in the morning and returns long after the child is asleep. It takes time to know a person intimately. The more time you spend with a person, the better you know that person. Surely this is true of knowing God. Our level of intimacy with God is determined by the time we spend alone in His presence. Let us make a habit of giving much time to this matter of prayer. Your life will clearly be more enjoyable and meaningful.

6. Select a daily prayer time that is free of distractions.

The person of prayer should endeavor to establish a prayer time free of distractions that might hinder communion with God. Charles Spurgeon shares this insight: “The fact of the eminent prayerfulness of Jesus is a lesson for us. The time He chose was admirable. It was the hour of silence, when the crowd would not disturb Him...the place was well selected. He was alone where none would intrude and where none could observe... the cold wind did not chill His devotions, the grim darkness did not darken His faith, or loneliness check His importunity. Most of us cannot watch with Him one hour, but He watched for us whole nights.” (1/110)

Saint Francis de Sales, the French Archbishop of Geneva, provides the suggestion, “If the heart wanders or is distracted, bring it back to the point quite gently and replace it tenderly in its Master’s presence. And even



if you did nothing during the whole of your hour but bring your heart back and place it again in our Lord's presence, though it went away every time you brought it back, your hour will be very well employed." (11/220)

7. Become uneasy when you miss a prayer time.

Sir Thomas Adney, one-time Lord Mayor of London, developed a unique habit all would do well to imitate. He formed a habit of becoming uneasy when something interfered with his time of prayer. Once, while attending a banquet, the Lord Mayor became noticeably agitated as the evening progressed. His prayer time was drawing near and his habit of uneasiness was setting in. The difficulty was how to keep his appointed time of prayer without seeming rude. Finally, he leaned over to a friend sitting nearby and quietly explained that he had a special engagement with a close friend that could not be postponed. Later Sir Adney returned to his chair without anyone knowing he had slipped away for prayer. His habit of uneasiness when missing a prayer time had once again found its effect.

8. Develop the use of arrow prayers.

An arrow prayer is simply a petition or word of thanksgiving sent heavenward at any time or place. Passages from well-loved portions of Scripture or simple words of thanks might be offered. A typical arrow prayer might be, "Jesus, I love you. Help me through this day," or, "Thank you, Lord, for giving me patience; keep me patient throughout this day." We might also frequently pray, "Lord, thrust laborers into the harvest of souls around the world." The habit of praying such prayers is especially beneficial because it helps the believer continue in a "spirit of prayer" as suggested earlier.



9. Plan a well-rounded prayer rendezvous.

It is a good habit to make our prayer time well rounded in scope. The various aspects of prayer, as suggested in Lecture Hall Three of our study, should be implemented into each time of prayer. For example, well-rounded prayer should include such aspects as praise, petition, and intercession. Special time for meditation and contemplation should be reserved. Be sure to include time for reading as well as “praying” God’s Word.

Years ago I developed a 12-step prayer plan that became a book titled *The Hour that Changes the World* (Chosen Books, 2005). It is designed to help intercessors develop up to an hour (or more) in daily prayer. It became a book that now has touched more than a million believers globally. The concepts in that book may be of help to you in planning a well-rounded “complete” prayer time.

Complete prayer consists of developing a devotional hour that brings into our praying as many of these key elements of prayer as possible. Paul told Ephesian believers they should pray “on all occasions with all kinds of prayer...” (Ephesians 6: 18a, NIV). This suggests there are a variety of aspects of prayer. I highlight 12 such aspects in my book. Further, prayer is most meaningful when we seek to follow such a plan daily. The 12-step “circle of prayer” that follows this Study Hall will help you accomplish this. As suggested in the book, if one gives just five minutes to each of these 12 areas, it is not at all difficult to pray an entire hour. Some might find themselves giving 20-to-30 minutes just to intercession alone. However, in using this guide be careful not to become legalistic. We must never limit the Holy Spirit from directing a prayer time as He chooses.



10. Pray out loud.

Those experienced in prayer will testify that vocal prayer is important to meaningful prayer because it causes the intercessor to listen more carefully to his or her petitions. Vocal prayer also encourages the person praying to treat Christ as an actual person, someone who is right there in the room. This is not to suggest that quiet prayers go unheard or that only vocal praying has power, but that speaking our prayers adds a dimension of faith and boldness to our praying. It helps us to hear our petitions.

11. Let every face we see prompt an inner prayer.

The human mind is capable of thinking quickly. We should take advantage of this capability and train our minds to think the word “pray” whenever someone crosses our path. Speaking on normal human behavior Professor Hallesby says, “Passing rapidly by a person on the street, we usually find time and opportunity to make critical remarks to ourselves about that person. It takes place almost automatically, because our evil nature is asserting itself. Just think if the spirit of God could make the new nature within us so strong that we would automatically lift our hearts in prayer to God every time we met someone!” (2/67)

12. Plan an annual prayer vacation.

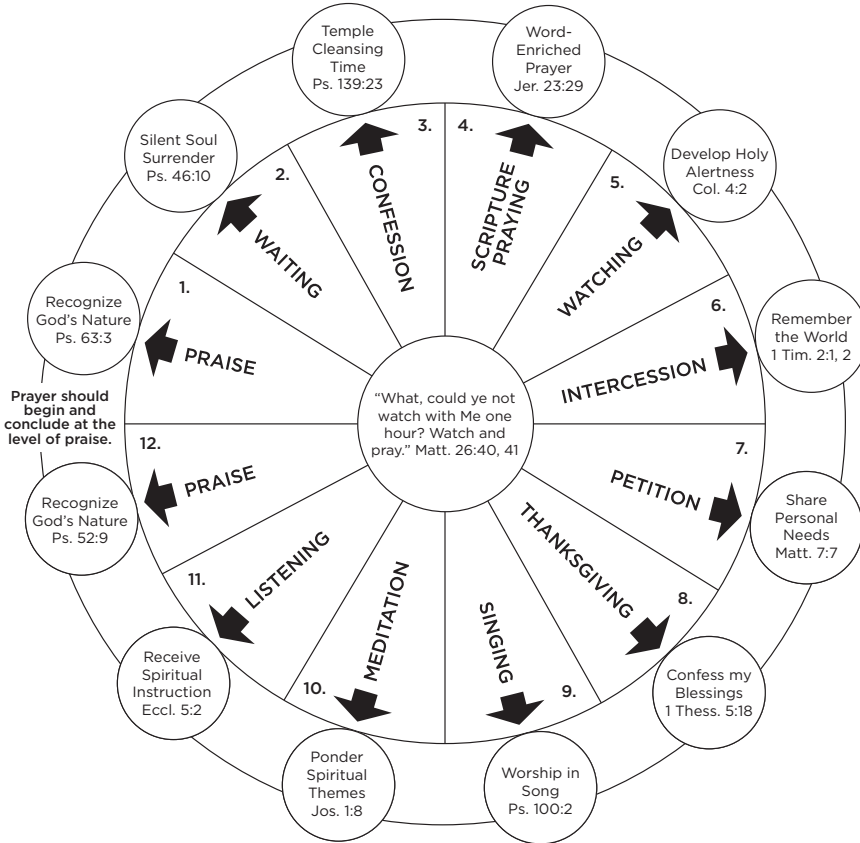
Jesus lived in continual prayer-fellowship with His Father in heaven. And yet, our Lord still found it desirable to remove Himself from the multitudes to be alone with His Father in prayer. Apparently Jesus felt a deep need for spiritual restoration that could not be achieved apart from isolated seasons of prayer.



No matter our station in life, or varied degrees of spiritual experiences, it would be well for Christians to plan special isolated times of prayer periodically throughout the year. Earlier we suggested that pastors set aside time for an annual, personal prayer retreat. This is an excellent habit for all believers as well, even if that retreat is only for one day. The next time you plan a vacation, include at least a day specifically set aside for prayer and meditation in God's Word. Husbands and wives may even wish to spend this together.

13. Give one minute each hour for prayer.

It is amazing how much can be accomplished in a single minute. Some prayer warriors have found it meaningful to set aside one minute every hour for specific prayer. This is never a substitute for your intimate time alone with God, but it will keep the matter of prayer before you during the many routine hours of the day. To remind you of this prayer habit, you might consider painting a small dot on your watch with fingernail polish at the 12:00 position. Whenever you glance at your watch, you'll be reminded to set aside at least one minute for prayer during that hour. (Some find it easier to put a sliver of tape on their watch, just at 12:00.) Although such prayers may not be lengthy, your one minute of prayer combines with those of many others who are praying at that moment to generate real power. E. M. Bounds says, "Units of prayer combined, like drops of water, can make an ocean that defies resistance."



(From *The Hour that Changes the World*, Chosen Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Used by permission.)



Lecture Hall Five

STUDY HALL THREE

BAD HABITS TO AVOID

Along with good habits to be developed for effective prayer, bad habits are to be avoided. The latter includes any habit that renders our prayer weak or ineffective. Following is a list of several “bad habits” that prayer warriors need to avoid.

1. To allow feelings to dictate our prayers.

“Feeling is no guide to the practice of prayer,” relates Donald Demaray. “If I have an appointment to preach on a given evening in Salem, I cannot let my feelings dictate whether or not I will go. Courtesy alone dictates that canceling is legitimate only in the event of an emergency. Praying daily must have about it that same sense of joyful obligation. And to keep the appointment with God is sooner or later to know the immense benefit of the touch of His Spirit.” (26/26)

As praying Christians we must never allow our prayer time to be dictated by the way we feel. Earlier it was suggested that very few people would give much time to prayer if “feeling like it” was a prerequisite to effective praying. Let us avoid the bad habit of allowing feelings to keep us from entering the closet of prayer to commune with God.



2. To substitute activity for prayer.

There is, perhaps, no greater danger in the Church today than the unfortunate trend of substituting prayer with activity. Andrew Bonar wrote with sorrow in his journal, “I work more than I pray. I must at once return, through the Lord’s strength, to not less than three hours a day in prayer and meditation upon the Word.” (32/36)

Like Bonar, most Christians spend too much time working and hardly any time praying. Because of this dilemma, the Church is sadly short on spiritual power. Dr. Torrey explains, “We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions; much machinery but few results.” (12/58) Robert Murray McCheyne adds, “No amount of activity in the King’s service will ever make up for the neglect of the King Himself.”

3. To be bound by legalism.

There will always be that class of people who feel compelled to impose their prayer standards on others. This is legalism that sometimes does more harm than good. What works well for one may not be suitable for all. We remember reading of the Indian Guru who was troubled by mice as he tried to meditate. The mystic obtained a cat and tied it to a nearby pole so the mice would be frightened away. In the process, however, the guru forgot to tell his followers why the cat was attached to the pole. Later he was astonished to observe his many disciples as they meditated, each with a cat tied to a pole. They assumed the animal was necessary for effective solitude.



To a lesser degree some prayer warriors face a similar problem. They assume that unique prayer habits that are successful for one should work automatically for all. This may not always be the case. G. Campbell Morgan suggests: “The matter of supreme importance is that we discover the method of prayer which brings us most actually to realize the presence of God and have communion with Him. The place, the time, the method, are matters concerning which there must be individual choice and decision. The matter of supreme importance is the cultivation of the habit of prayer.” (31/112) Another author adds, “Prayer should be as natural as breathing and as enjoyable as eating.” (9/20)

Transitioning from Bad to Good Habits

Writing on the subject of forming proper habits, psychologist William James concludes there are four basic steps essential to the forming of good habits. These easily could be applied directly to forming good prayer habits.

First, the habit should be started with full self-commitment and with the “burning of bridges.” (We must forget about past failures. We won’t turn back.)

Second, the new action or thought should be repeated frequently and, if possible, without lapse, especially in the early stages.

Third, the impulse to obey that habit should be honored without delay, even if the impulse occurs “out of hours.”



Fourth, the habit should be practiced beyond routine regularity and at some cost. (27/26) There will, indeed, always be a cost. Are we willing to pay that cost? May each student of prayer meditate on these thoughts and, with a decision of the will, seek to form even stronger prayer habits.



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall Three



Additional Insights



Lecture Hall Five

STUDY HALL FOUR

THE PLACE OF PRAYER

It was not uncommon for the saints of ages past to sanctify a special place for prayer. Abraham had a special “high place” somewhere above the Judean landscape that became his “Gethsemane” where he went to meet with God from time to time (Genesis 19:27). Daniel had a “chamber” for prayer (Daniel 6:10). Jesus had a special place for prayer in the mountains near Jerusalem as well as His favored “garden spot”—Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36). Isaac, as we recall, preferred to meet with God in the fields (Genesis 24:62-63), and Habakkuk had a “watch tower” (Habakkuk 2:1, NLT).

On one occasion Christ even suggested we “enter our closet” when we pray. By this He meant that we set aside a quiet place. The word “closet” comes from a New Testament Greek word *tamieion*, or “pantry.” Scholars say it referred to a small lean-to structure erected on the cool side of the house that formed a storeroom for dried meats, fruit, figs and the like. When Christ spoke of a “*tamieion*,” our Lord wasn’t speaking of merely an attitude in prayer but an actual place for prayer. If he wasn’t speaking of a specific place, He would not have suggested that we “shut the door.”

Setting aside a specific place to pray was also common in the lives of later historic figures. Jonathan



Edwards is but one example. Even in his early years young Edwards spent many hours in the woods praying. There he built a tree house where he waited long hours in God's presence. Later in life, historians tell us, Edwards set aside a special place to pray in each church wherein he ministered. It was in these very places, no doubt, that God revealed hidden truth that became the substance for Edwards' powerful preaching.

The Gap Concept

Every Christian ought to find a specific place, free of all distractions, for the purpose of communion with God in prayer. Several decades ago, having already been dealt with by God for many years on the importance of prayer, I felt a deep impression from God to establish a prayer center where young people could pray day and night for the needs of others and especially for world evangelism. My vision included a mental picture of a massive army on the march, symbolizing a well-organized force of prayer warriors destined to change the world.

A second aspect of this vision-encounter included a mental picture of a large building converted into a 24-hour prayer center. It was a place to which high school graduates could come to sacrifice several months, or a full year, for intercessory prayer. These youth would actually live at the prayer center, even obtaining full- or part-time jobs to help pay the bills.

During my vision I observed a special room where prayer was to continue day and night. It was to be called "The Gap." The scriptural basis for "The Gap" was Ezekiel 22:30. Here God declares, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me



in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not destroy it, but I found none” (NIV).

Six months following my prayer-vision, God allowed this unique “World Prayer Center” to come into being. The young people participating called themselves “The Prayer Corps,” and as an army of prayer warriors they began to attack the strongholds of Satan day and night through prayer. They sustained prayer for almost 40,000 hours non-stop for some five years. Today, thousands of “Gap” prayer rooms have been established in churches and family settings throughout the world. My personal “Gap” is in a large walk-in closet in the basement of our Colorado home. A family “Gap” is an excellent place of retreat where one’s entire family can go to be alone with God, whether individually or corporately. As one might imagine, setting aside a place exclusively for prayer has a tremendous impact on the family. It becomes a personal “Gethsemane” where family members can retreat often to commune with God.

Following is a more thorough look at the “Gap” ministry and how it will benefit your prayer life.

1. The Gap is a place where spiritual dependence on God is cultivated.

Sadly, many believers in the church today are independent in matters spiritual. By not setting time aside for daily prayer they are, in reality, saying they do not feel prayer is that important. Some of these would no doubt like to pray, but their house is full of active children, there are a myriad of other distractions, and they simply lack a quiet place to get away for personal prayer. Setting aside a specific place for such prayer is the solution, whether it’s an actual closet set aside for



this purpose or an easy chair by a fireplace where one retreats early in the morning before others in the family are up. G. Campbell Morgan declares, “Until we find some place of habitual loneliness made sacred, not by material accessories, but by spiritual access, we are not as strong as we might be, and we have not formed the mightiest habit in the life of prayer.” (31/110)

2. The Gap is a place to “stand before” the Lord for lost souls.

The cry of the Lord through Ezekiel was for a man “among them who would...stand before me...” (Ezekiel 22:30). God was searching for someone among His people who would express a concern for the spiritual well-being of others. Because God was not able to find such a person, He says, “So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger...” (Ezekiel 22:31, NIV).

The individual who sets aside a special place for prayer—the person who “stands in the gap before the Lord for the land”—makes it possible for many lost people to find Christ in scores of nations around the world. Setting aside a closet or spare room (or any quiet place) for the exclusive purpose of ministering to the world in prayer is one of the noblest acts of generosity a person can perform.

3. The gap is a place to prepare for spiritual battle.

During the famous Welsh revival a minister was said to be seeing extraordinary results because of the preaching of but a single sermon. Another area pastor heard of this success and desired to learn the minister’s secret. Walking a great distance to visit this minister’s



humble cottage, the first thing the visiting pastor asked was, “Brother, where did you get that sermon?”

A smile came upon the preacher’s face as he responded, “Come, I’ll show you where I discovered that message.” The visitor was not taken to a well-stocked library or personal study but to a poorly furnished room lacking any Bible commentaries or books containing sermon outlines. There was only a threadbare rug near a small window overlooking a grassy hillside.

The old preacher smiled again and pointing to a corner of the room declared, “Brother, right over there is where I got that sermon. My heart was heavy for lost souls. One night I knelt there—and cried for power...the hours passed until midnight struck, and the stars looked down on a sleepy world, but the answer came not. I prayed on until I saw a faint streak of grey shoot up, then it was silver—then the silver became purple and gold. Then the sermon came and the power came, and men fell under the influence of the Holy Spirit.”

The room in which that minister received this unique visitation of God was a place reserved exclusively for prayer. It was the preacher’s personal “Gap.” Because he spent time “standing in the gap before the Lord for the land,” God prepared him for powerful spiritual victories.

Another great prayer warrior, Seth Rees, spoke of a place much like the one frequented by the Welsh revivalist. Rees had a room sanctified especially for prayer. He testifies, “The solitude of this small study is more to my poor soul than all my social intercourse with humanity. It is here that I am transported to the sunlit peaks where eternal verities blaze and glow in unfading splendor, until all that is terrestrial passes into eclipse.”



The experienced intercessor concludes, “Amid misunderstandings, peril, toil and pain, an hour with Him behind these four walls...lends the strength to climb Heaven’s steepest ascents. What strange strength I derive in this solitary nook.” (1/125)

4. The Gap is a place where weary warriors are restored.

The “Gap” is a place where followers of Christ can find the rest of God. It is to retreat to the “quiet waters” of the 23rd Psalm where our Lord “restores my soul” (Psalm 23:2b-3a, NIV). Abraham learned this principle. He “planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God” (Genesis 21:33, NKJV). It is interesting that wherever Abraham went he erected an altar of sacrifice for the purpose of prayer and thanksgiving. Abraham needed these special places of prayer to restore his weary soul. Similarly, the place of prayer is our place of daily spiritual renewal. It is, indeed, that place of “quiet waters” where our Shepherd restores a tired, needy soul.

5. The Gap is a place to engage in inward spiritual activity.

It is important from time to time that we cease our outward activity and give ourselves to inward spiritual activity. Professor Hallesby explains, “Not until we have come apart from those things which divert our attention to outward things, are our souls free to engage in inward activity. As soon as outward things lose their distracting influence over our soul-life, God Himself can attune our souls to prayer, because we are in a devotional attitude.” (2/93) Here is where a personal “Gap” holds special value for the praying believer. It provides this seeker with a place for developing inward spiritual activity.



6. The Gap is a place of cultivating spiritual growth.

Just as Christ confirmed His commitment in Gethsemane when He said to His Father "...not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 29:39b, NIV), we, too, confirm our commitment as we retreat to our personal Gethsemane. The place of prayer is the place of spiritual growth. A wise prayer warrior explains, "All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared to our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, and we prevail in private prayer." (1/76) Real spiritual growth, then, comes in the place of prayer alone with God. The place of prayer, indeed, is the place of growth.

7. The Gap is a place where spiritual power is generated.

Church history reveals that most spiritual awakenings resulted from prayer that began in a specific place or room. Such was the case with the great revival that broke out during a convention in Nagaland, India. A featured speaker at the convention reported, "Seldom have I felt the presence of God as we did...there was an overwhelming consciousness of His presence...there was a small thatched auxiliary building where prayer was offered around the clock. I stepped into this room several times during the convention, and each time I sensed power, although you couldn't hear anything."

The student of prayer will find similar power generated when setting aside time daily in his personal place of prayer.



A Final Caution

A final caution is needed as we conclude this important discussion of developing a practical program of prayer. When the prayer warrior decides to begin a personal or family “Gap” ministry he should expect an all-out attack from the enemy of prayer. Remember, Satan cares little of those who talk of doing a thing, but releases his fury on those who actually commence to do it. Leonard Ravenhill preached, “Neither Gideon nor anyone else gets into trouble because of his vision. It is actions that bring down the wrath of the offended powers. Let a Gideon slip out at midnight and cut down the Groves at Baal; then hell releases its fury.” (15/71) Be on guard as you endeavor to begin your systematic program of prayer. Let nothing deprive you of participating in this world-changing calling. It is time for action.



Student Response

My Insights from Study Hall Four





CHAPTER 6

Lecture Hall Six

THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S PRAISE-LIFE

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Lecture Hall Six

STUDY HALL ONE THIS IS PRAISE

Praise, that aspect of adoring and worshiping God with our words and acts just because He is God, is as essential to powerful praying as air is to breathing. The one entirely depends on the other. E. M. Bounds explains, “Gratitude arises from the contemplation of the goodness of God. Praise is so distinctly and definitely wedded to prayer, so inseparably joined, that they cannot be divorced.” (22)

Because praise is so vital to prayer, an entire Lecture Hall in our School of Prayer must be devoted to this theme.

1. Praise is to recognize God for Who He is.

Ralph Herring in *The Cycle of Prayer* explains that praise is simply the “making of glory.” According to Herring, “The basic idea in the Greek word *doxa* (from which we get doxology), translated ‘glory,’ is opinion, recognition.” (16/57) Praise, then, is that aspect of prayer that gives glory to God. It is recognizing God as the sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe.



2. Praise is the aspect of prayer that loves God for all His goodness.

Praise is not begging God but loving God. It is the laying aside of our demands so we can fellowship with Him. Dr. Harold Lindsell explains, “In adoration no promises are claimed; no long lists of answered prayers are recited; no proof is needed to reveal the power of God to hear and to answer prayer; no snares are attached to its practice. It has its own efficacious completeness, so that if adoration alone is engaged in, the aspiring soul needs nothing more. It has already found God. That is enough.” (27/30)

Not only does praise share our love with God, but this love is at the highest level of intimacy. To possess a true spirit of praise is to become so intimate with our Father that we rarely pass through an experience without sharing it with Him. Lovers discuss even the most incidental of events that happen; so it is with the ministry of praise. E. M. Bounds explains, “Praise is the heart sending its full and happy pulsations up to God through the glad currents of joy and thanksgiving.” (20)

3. Praise is to vocalize our love for God.

Previously we suggested that speaking aloud during prayer is important for effective praying. The emphasis of a particular thought or petition seems to be stronger when it is vocalized. This is even truer in the case of praise. Unfortunately, some feel awkward in vocalizing their love for God. Vance Havner declares, “The same church members who yell like Comanche Indians at a ball game on Saturday sit like wooden Indians in church on Sunday.” (15/76)



We are not suggesting it is necessary to “yell” at God, but we do encourage the prayer warrior to “vocalize” his or her love for the Lord. The young husband may know his wife loves him and that she often “thinks” about this love, but that love is given even greater meaning when it is vocalized. In a similar sense, God knows we love Him. He knows our deepest thoughts. But the love we have for our Heavenly Father is greatly enriched with vocalized praise, which Scripture calls the “fruit of our lips” (Hebrews 13:15, NKJV).



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall One



Lecture Hall Six

STUDY HALL TWO

PRINCIPLES OF THE PRAISE-LIFE

Praise is more than a mere aspect of prayer, as suggested; it is a major purpose of prayer. Even more, praise is our whole purpose for living. It is not merely a single phase of the prayer warrior's life; it is his life. Consider these thoughts regarding the prayer warrior's praise-life:

1. The praise-life is a specialized ministry unto the Lord.

In Peter's first epistle we discover that God renews a special worship calling He originally gave to the children of Israel. It is described as the "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). Peter explains that we are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (NKJV). In this same chapter Peter refers to believers as "a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV). Scholars explain that the expression "a royal priesthood" corresponds directly to the phrase found in Exodus 19:6—"a kingdom of priests." Thus, when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, we partake of this "ministry unto the Lord." It is not a ministry reserved only for a select group of Christians. Whereas some may be called to preach, others to serve as missionaries, teachers, or evangelists; all believers are called to the ministry unto the Lord (Revelation 1:5, 6).



2. The praise-life teaches the believer to be generous.

The psalmist spoke of praise as the evening “sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2). All praise, to be sure, involves the element of giving. As someone has said, “A stingy man cannot praise another. The price is too high.” Indeed, to praise a person is to recognize the worth of that person. In this sense the praise-life teaches generosity. Generally speaking, a person who freely praises the Lord is one who is capable of freely giving of his substance for the sake of others. In this regard praise becomes important to the growth of individual Christians. Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Learning to praise is learning to give.

3. The praise-life is man’s way to continually acknowledge God.

To master the praise-life we must learn to continually recognize who God is and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ. We must say, as Helen Shoemaker, “Here is God in His universal aspect—the creator and director of the universe and of life; the fountainhead of divine energy. Mind of all minds. Wisdom above all wisdom. Power above all power. Light above all light. Love beyond all love.” After recognizing this Helen Shoemaker concludes, “No wonder we fall to our knees in worship and adoration.” (13/49)

Praise, then, is not necessarily limited only to words. Though we have suggested the value of vocalizing specific praise, the praise-life also involves a continual recognition of God. True, there may be times we fall physically to our knees in worship and adoration, but at all other times our spirits will be on our knees even if our bodies are on their feet.



4. The praise-life is a weapon for warfare.

The late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, reveals a poignant thought that well illustrates this principle. He declares, "The world will be saved by only one thing and that is worship." (13/49) Praise is, indeed, a power in and of itself. True, this is a mystery, but still a fact. Those who have experienced great power with God in the past were those who learned to give God all the praise and glory for every accomplishment. God's giants were rarely, if ever, selfish men. They learned well the use of this powerful weapon of worship. Let every believer learn to master the use of this weapon called praise.

5. The praise-life begins in adoration of God.

Praise-filled adoration is the only real gift man can offer God. What else could we possibly give God besides our worship? After all, He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). By the hand of Jesus Christ God put every star in its proper place. (See Colossians 1:15-16.) He created the laws and forces governing the orbiting planets. Nothing exists apart from the powerful hand of our mighty Creator. In the truest sense, God needs nothing save the love of those beings He created. Every person has been given the power of choice in this matter by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior, or by rejecting God's love through rejecting Christ. Thus, the whole salvation experience centers around adoration. To love God is to say I not only believe in You, but I also accept what You have done for me through Jesus Christ. In this sense, when the believer accepts God's forgiveness he is consummating the praise-life. The remainder of his life will be given to adoring God.



6. The praise-life leads a follower of Jesus to higher spiritual ground.

The prophet Isaiah shares, “Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob...” (Isaiah 58:14, NKJV).

The expression “delight,” as Isaiah records it, means to thoroughly enjoy the Lord. It does not refer to intercession, petition, or any other aspect of prayer. It concerns loving God because He is God—nothing more, nothing less. The results from delighting ourselves in the Lord will be automatic; we will “ride on the high hills,” a symbol of overcoming Satan’s powers. This also suggests we will move in our Christian experience to higher ground. Praise is “the higher ground experience.”



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall Two



Lecture Hall Six

STUDY HALL THREE

EXPANDING OUR WORSHIP

Praise, as we have shared, is the adoration of God. It centers exclusively on the worship focus of prayer. It is to love God for what He is. Thanksgiving, on the other hand, is to thank God for what He has done. It involves specifics. Thanksgiving helps us expand our worship. It is to think of all the things God has done for us, no matter how insignificant, and put these thoughts into words of appreciation. Whereas praise is verbalizing our love for God by acknowledging His nature and character, thanksgiving is verbalizing specific “thank you’s” for the kindnesses of God.

Scripture makes it clear that thanksgiving is actually an “offering of sacrifice.” On one occasion the Psalmist declares, “Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High” (Psalm 50:14, NKJV). Later he says, “He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me” (Psalm 50:23, RSV). Throughout the Psalms we see numerous expressions on the importance of “thanksgiving.”

Perhaps thanksgiving is considered a sacrifice because so many forget to acknowledge the goodness of God. We recall how Jesus healed 10 lepers, but only one returned to say “thank you.” (See Luke 17:12-18.) Paul suggested we not worry about anything, but let our requests be made known unto God—“with thanksgiving”



(Philippians 4:6). The fact he highlighted this one discipline indicates its value in our praying. Further, Scripture lists thanksgiving as a specific key to entering God's presence: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving...Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name" (Psalm 100:4, NKJV).

Of course, the chief value of thanksgiving is that it causes the believer to mentally itemize all the blessings and benefits from God. Someday expand your worship even more by walking through your house (including your closets) and thanking God verbally for as many items as you can, acknowledging that He provided these items. On several occasions in my life I've gone on thanksgiving walks, thanking God for the trees, the colors of the flowers, the fragrances in the air, the beauty of the clouds—all in the context that God created all this and gave humankind the minds to comprehend the beauty of it all.

Intercessory Worship

In more recent years I have come to recognize another aspect of both worship and intercession that when combined become what some have referred to as intercessory worship. In my book, *Heights of Delight* (one of a three-book trilogy on this subject), I defined intercessory worship as "Concentrated worship that becomes intercessory in nature because it carries the prayers of God's people, like the fragrance of incense, before God's throne." We see an interesting picture of this type of prayer-saturated worship in a reference to the use of harps and bowls when various elders and living creatures come before God's throne and His Son, the Lamb, in Revelation 5:8-10. Here we read:

And when [the Lamb] had taken [the scroll], the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell



down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (v. 8).

As I explained in *Heights of Delight*, the worshipers coming before the Lamb with harps in one hand (symbols of worship) and bowls in the other (symbols of prayer and intercession) seem to combine these two symbols in the release of a song never sung before. It is a song of global harvest. John's revelation continues:

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (v. 9).

Interestingly, the harp and bowl symbolism in this passage is linked to redeemed humanity coming out of every tribe, language, people and nation. The combination of prayer and worship here is obviously linked to a global harvest.

Especially helping me understand the significant relationship of intercessory worship to the fulfilling of the Great Commission are John Piper's powerful words in his remarkable book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*. He explained:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever." (*Let the Nations Be Glad*, Baker Book House, 1993, p.11.)



There is, indeed, an element of victorious warfare that results from prayer-saturated worship, especially when a song carries our prayers heavenward. Mary Slosser, who labored long years among the Chinese, said of such music in worship: “I sing the Doxology and dismiss the devil!” Speaking on the power of a song Amy Carmichael adds, “I believe truly that Satan cannot endure it and so slips out of the room—more or less!—when there is a true song.” She concludes, “Prayer rises more easily, more spontaneously, after one has let those wings, words and music, carry one out of oneself into that upper air.” (26/27)

There is perhaps no aspect of worship so powerful, and yet so neglected, as the aspect of singing in personal prayer. Even before the Psalmist reminds us we are to enter the Father’s gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, he says, “Come before His presence with singing” (Psalm 100:2, NKJV). It would seem that worship in song is as vital to coming into God’s presence as both thanksgiving and praise. It allows us to walk directly into the throne room of the Lord.

Paul spoke on two occasions of “making melody” in our hearts unto the Lord “with spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16). A “spiritual song” would be that which comes from the heart. It would not appear that Paul is speaking of songs from a hymnbook. Paul and Silas, we recall, “sang praises” unto God while in jail (Acts 16:25). Perhaps their songs of praise were based on original melodies from the heart. Certainly they had no hymnbooks in their possession. What they sang had to come from within.

Adding melody to our prayer, or singing the Scripture, adds tremendous meaning to our worship. Of



course, some might want to use a hymnbook or book of familiar choruses as a guide in this aspect of worship, though this is probably not Paul's intent when he used the expression, "spiritual song." We must remember the hymn writer David, author of so many psalms, did not say, "Sing my songs." He did say, "Sing a new song." (See Psalms 33:3; 96:1; 98:1.) I often sing "a new song" to the Lord during prayer. Seldom do I set aside an hour of prayer that doesn't have at least several minutes of heart songs, including the singing of passages from the Psalms that were all once songs sung by worshipers in ancient Bible times.

Try singing a favorite Scripture the next time you pray, creating the melody in your heart, and offer that song as a gift of praise to God. Also sing some of your prayers. As stated, the Psalms were originally songs and many of these are prayers rather than declarations of praise. (See Psalms 91:1-2; 88:1-3; 3:1-4.) Such singing often becomes intercessory in nature.

We especially see a unique example of this in the ancient battle between Judah and the forces of Moab, Ammon and Mount Seir (1 Chronicles 20:1-23). To King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah there appeared to be no hope. But then a most unusual strategy emerged as the king consulted with the people. Singers were appointed to go ahead of the army into the battle (v. 22). However, Judah never had to fight.

Concerning these singers, Scripture relates: "At the moment they began to sing and give praise, the LORD caused the armies of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves...they turned on each other" (1 Chronicles 20:22-23b, NLT). Following this unusual victory it took Judah three full days to



gather up all the spoils (v. 25). What is interesting about this victory is that the worship became intercessory in nature in that the song accomplished the same result that might have occurred if the people had simply cried out to God in prayer. But the Scripture does not say the king appointed intercessors but singers. No doubt the Lord wanted to show His people that when praise enthrones Himself in a situation a victory is assured. (See Psalm 22:3.) This would suggest to intercessors today that worship-saturated intercession is the most powerful praying of all.



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall Three



Lecture Hall Six

STUDY HALL FOUR

JOY FACTORS IN WORSHIP

Praise, thanksgiving, and worship in song are clearly vital to our adoration of God. These aspects of worship, however, are generally thought of in terms of “specific acts” to be implemented into a given prayer time. This is important, but it is only the beginning of our praise-life. Praise must go beyond the prayer closet. We must learn to continually “practice the presence of God.”

It was the 16th century monk, Brother Lawrence, who friends say perfected this beautiful ministry. This unique Christian once wrote to an acquaintance, “The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.” (42) Later a friend said of Brother Lawrence, “His prayer was nothing else but a sense of God, his soul being at that time insensible to everything but Divine love; and that when the appointed times of prayer were passed, he found no difference, because he still continued with God, praising and blessing Him with all of his might, so that he passed his life in continual joy.” (42)



Practicing God's presence is, indeed, a life of continual joy. Following is a list of several "joy-factors" concerning the discipline of practicing God's presence.

1. To practice the presence of God is to be in constant communion with our Heavenly Father.

Charles Spurgeon relates the story of a remarkable man, Mr. Rowland Hill, highly respected for his spiritual depth. While visiting his estate Mr. Spurgeon inquired about the success of this dear man. Specifically, Spurgeon wondered where the man spent his time praying and studying God's Word. A friend of Dr. Hill replied, "The fact is, we never found any. Mr. Hill used to study in the garden, in the parlor, in the bedroom, in the streets, in the woods, anywhere."

The visiting preacher then asked, "But where did he retire for prayer?" The friend answered, "We're not sure exactly. He was always praying. Sometimes he would stand in Blackfriars Road with his hand under his coat tails, looking in a shop window. But under his breath he'd be praying. You could hear him if you got close enough. Mr. Hill was always praying."

Concerning this unique saint, Spurgeon concludes, "He had got into a constant state of prayer." (34/88) Indeed, Rowland Hill had found the key to this ministry of practicing the presence of God. He was always in communication with the Father. Rowland Hill had learned that fellowship with the Father is the very heart of the prayer life, and it need not stop at the prayer closet. As Hope MacDonald explains, "Our highest calling in life is not in serving Jesus, but in being with Him. He chose 12 disciples that they might be with Him. Our effective service and love for others can only come from being



alone with God in prayer and in fellowship and in the reading of His Word.” (35/30) It is from these quiet times that we can carry that spirit of worship into our day.

Few have learned this gracious ministry because they fail to realize that God is with them in everything they do. They have yet to understand fully the thought of Jacob Boehme, the German worshiper who declared, “But open your eyes and the world is full of God.” (11/221)

2. To practice the presence of God is to carry a “spirit of prayer” into all aspects of life.

Only those who have tasted pain know the joy and peace of being free of that pain. Only those who have had the power to breathe normally taken from them can testify of the real joy of breathing freely. Some Christians, unfortunately, have lost the great joy of practicing God’s presence because of life’s many distractions. Brother Lawrence was not confronted with cable TV, the Internet or a cell phone. I’ve learned in recent years that people jumping up and rushing from an auditorium while I am preaching is not because they are offended by my message, but because their cell phones are turned to “vibrate” and they’ve just received a call! Sadly, we are the microwave generation, wanting everything now, and this spirit often interferes with our sense of practicing God’s presence.

Continual worship, however, is to the soul what breath is to the body. Without power to breathe, the body cannot live. Breathing provides the body with a constant source of energy. Daily we drink but once or twice and eat only two or three meals. Breathing, however, is a continual endeavor. It isn’t considered a joy or privilege until it is seriously limited.



We must guard against the danger of taking worship for granted. Prayer should become a conscious aspect of all we do. If we do become discouraged and our prayer life begins to weaken, we must never give up. The mystic François Fenelon explains, “Do not be discouraged at your faults; bear with yourself in correcting them, as you would with your neighbor. Accustom yourself gradually to carry prayer into all your daily occupations. Speak, move, and work in peace, as if you were in prayer.” (11/119)

3. To practice the presence of God includes sleeping in His presence.

This may seem unusual but practicing the presence of God need not be limited to our waking hours. Enjoying God’s presence can flow into our hours of sleep. The Psalmist said, “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8, NKJV). John Baillie referred to this subject as “the theology of sleep.” Baillie declared, “Some of us saints have gone so far as to say that among the things God gives to His beloved in sleep is an increase in their love of Him.” (26/46) Baillie’s concept is thoroughly scriptural. The Psalmist wrote, “...He gives His beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:2, NKJV). Even while sleeping, the prayer warrior may subconsciously enjoy the presence of God. Of course those thoughts that linger in the subconscious through the night are largely determined by what we think during the day. In this regard the “healthful thinking” we spoke of in an earlier Study Hall is also vital to what happens when we are asleep.



4. To practice the presence of God is to walk the direction God leads us.

It is not possible to walk worshipfully with God when we insist on going in a direction contrary to His will. We must follow Him. If He takes us through a valley we must be content with the valley. Our strength is simple—God is with us. Helen Wodehouse, a noted educator, explains, “We think we must climb to a certain height of goodness before we can reach God. But he says not ‘At the end of the way you may find me’; He says, ‘I am the way; I am the road under your feet, the road that begins just as low as you happen to be.’ If we are in a hole the way begins in the hole. The moment we set our face in the same direction as His, we are walking with God.” (11/220)

As we strive to walk in the direction God leads, we can be assured He will continually speak to us. And though the prayer closet is an excellent place to hear God speak, and the church sanctuary a fine place to meet God in worship, every moment is an opportunity to practice the presence of God. George MacDonald advises, “Never wait for a fitter time or place to talk to Him. To wait till thou go to church or to thy closet is to make Him wait. He will listen as thou walkest.” (11/215)

To practice the presence of God, then, is to walk and talk with God, moment by moment, every day. No matter what happens God is always with us to share each experience. He is there, not as a dictator to deprive us of life’s pleasures, but as a Father who delights in the growth and maturity of His children. As an earthly father is blessed by a daughter’s bouquet of dandelions or a son’s first attempt to mow the lawn, God is blessed when we bring Him into the minor affairs of our lives. Professor



Hallesby explains, “God is glad when we, His little children, feel a desire to speak with Him about our daily experiences. He, too, desires to share with you the little things of life. That is always the way when two people love each other. They share everything, little things as well as big things, their joys as well as their sorrows. That is what makes love so rich and so joyous.” (2/144)

5. To practice the presence of God is to develop a friendship relationship.

There is something special in the marital relationship when the husband can say to the wife, “You know, you are more than just my wife, you are my best friend.” Unfortunately, there are many marriages where the husband and wife have never become genuine friends. The same is true with many spiritual experiences of Christians. John Anthony Hanne, in *Prayer or Pretense*, explains that “prayer is a friendship with God that makes conversation possible.” (36/17) Being friends with God is as essential to our spiritual relationship as being friends with our spouse is essential to the marital relationship. The characteristic of friends is open communication. Those who are close friends talk openly about any matter. Abraham cultivated such a relationship with God. James relates, “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*’ And he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23, NKJV).

Of course, to suggest that we become “friends” with God causes some to suggest that we are attempting to bring God to our level, thus becoming too familiar with Him. As one preacher says, “God cannot be treated on a ‘buddy-buddy’ basis.” True, using the word “buddy” seems inappropriate, but nothing in Scripture



implies we cannot be friends with God. The Lord talked with Moses as to a friend (Exodus 33:11). Enoch walked with God, the Bible says, which surely implies close friendship (Genesis 5:24). In a similar sense, God wants to be your friend. But to develop such a friendship with another person, much time must be spent with that person. The same is true in our relationship with God. We must give much time to it. This, alone, will lead us to the ultimate goal of the believer, as expressed so aptly by Brother Lawrence: "To become, in this life, the most perfect worshipers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity." (42)



Student Response
My Insights from Study Hall Four



Additional Insights





CHAPTER 7

Lecture Hall Seven

THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S
MARCHING ORDERS

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Lecture Hall Seven

STUDY HALL ONE

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

Powerful praying is only possible if we pray in the will of God. Scripture declares, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14, NKJV). The decisive issue in this matter of prayer, then, is what God desires for us in a given situation. Archbishop Temple explains, “The essential act of prayer is not the bending of God’s will to ours, but the bending of our will to His. The proper outline of a Christian’s prayer is not, ‘Please do for me what I want’ but ‘Please do in me, with me and through me what you want.’” (13/61)

Only in finding God’s will for our praying can we be a part of God’s unique plan, which Helen Shoemaker likened to a great tapestry complete with “threads of praise, persistence, trust, love and sacrifice.” Mrs. Shoemaker adds, “Like the ancient weavers, we weave from behind, obediently following directions on His blueprint, and as we weave, the great design takes shape and gradually stands out clear and complete.” (13/63)

How do we determine God’s will through prayer? The fiery preacher, E. W. Kenyon, answers, “Prayer is simply talking it over with Him, getting His views, His will, His plans, and our carrying out those plans with His grace, ability and wisdom.” (9/20)



Seeking Divine Guidance

There exists in Italy a remote harbor reached only by crossing a narrow channel dangerously lined with jagged rocks. Even the strongest of vessels had at times been lost. The black of night made it extremely difficult for a ship's captain to steer his craft through the treacherous harbor. Some years ago, recognizing this danger, maritime authorities at a nearby port carefully mounted three special lights throughout the harbor for the purpose of guiding vessels in the night. The captains of these vessels, however, do not steer from one light to the next as they cross the narrow channel. Rather, each light must be lined up perfectly with the others. If the captain sees two or three separate lights in the distance, he knows he is off course. All three must line up perfectly.

There is a similar truth involved in seeking guidance from God through prayer. In order to navigate our vessels of life properly, God has provided three lights that must be lined up carefully if we are to proceed safely in His will.

1. The will of God is made known in God's Word.

Some matters are clearly God's will. The Bible makes these occasions plain. For example, we know God longs for all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). World evangelization clearly is the will of God. We also know it is God's will that we do not commit adultery. Scripture says, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14, NKJV). So, in many cases God's Word clearly reveals His will. (Further, as we'll see more clearly later in our study, God's Word is the foundation for all guidance.) Thus, the first light that we must line up with in the



harbor of pursuing divine direction is the authority of the Scriptures. Is my decision in harmony with the Bible?

2. The will of God is made known by circumstances.

Often God reveals His will through unique situations and circumstances. These generally occur in relationship to specific prayers we have prayed about a matter. For example, a young man in law school may spend much time in prayer concerning God's will for his life. He questions whether to continue studying law or leave law school to enter seminary. If during his weeks of searching the young man suddenly receives an unexpected full scholarship for his remaining years at law school, it could be God is guiding him through these circumstances. God often uses circumstances to lead His children. Circumstances often become the second light in the harbor of seeking God's guidance.

3. The will of God is made known by the inner voice of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus made it clear the Holy Spirit would live within us for the purpose of guiding and directing us (John 14:17). He told His disciples not to worry beforehand about answering questions when they were arrested because the Holy Spirit within would give wisdom in that moment. It would be the inner voice of the Holy Spirit guiding them (Matthew 10:19). So it is for believers today. The inner voice of the Spirit will guide and direct. This, then, becomes the third light in our harbor.

These three important aspects of guidance—God's Word, circumstances, and the Holy Spirit—are all vitally important in determining God's will for a given matter.



But all three must function in harmony with each other to assure true guidance. Like the lights in the Italian harbor, these “spiritual lights” must line up as one. Only then should we move forward in a particular direction.



Additional Insights



Lecture Hall Seven

STUDY HALL TWO

PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE GUIDANCE

Knowing or finding the will of God and the subject of divine guidance generally are synonymous. A potential missionary may say, “God told me to go to Indonesia,” whereas another might explain, “It is the will of God that I go to Indonesia.” Both are saying essentially the same thing. One speaks of “the voice of God” and the other of “the will of God.” All of this concerns the matter of receiving guidance. To further understand this important subject, consider several principles of divine guidance.

1. It is possible to hear God’s voice.

Before any list of principles is to be discussed concerning divine guidance, we must begin with this fact—God still speaks to people today! As one writer explains, “The basic and underlying premise for all guidance is that it is possible to know the will of God!” (41/33)

Certainly Paul believed receiving specific divine directions for life was possible. He told the Colossian Church he would keep praying for them until they were “filled with the knowledge of His [God’s] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Colossians 1:9, NKJV).



Virginia Whitman shares a remarkable account that well illustrates this first principle. In Spain a lady from the small village of La Mancha was visiting her invalid brother in Madrid. During her stay she desired to find an evangelical church where she could grow in her Christian experience. Unable to locate such a church, or find anyone to direct her, she asked God for guidance. The thought occurred while praying to take a bus to the center of town and wait on God to do the rest. Her brother, of course, was certain his sister was crazy to look for a small church in a city of millions, especially since his sister was blind.

Neither her blindness nor the magnitude of the obstacle before her hindered the lady's faith. With great expectations she boarded a bus, trusting God to lead her one step at a time. Soon another woman walked down the aisle and occupied the seat beside her. Sensing someone near, the blind Christian reached into her purse and fumbled for a gospel booklet. With a gentle witness for Jesus, the blind lady handed the message to the woman beside her. In the conversation following, it became apparent that the Madrid resident was on her way to church. The blind lady quickly asked, "Could you possibly tell me where the First Baptist Church is located?" To her utter amazement the woman answered, "Why, that's exactly where I'm going. You can go with me." (7/34,35)

Christians should not be surprised when hearing such accounts. God does speak today. No generation has lived without this principle being in effect. Gutenberg, the man who first printed the Bible, obviously believed this. While seeking a way to overcome the tiring process of copying lengthy manuscripts by hand, Gutenberg came upon the idea of using movable type. It was an



idea that actually came from prayer. Upon making the discovery, Gutenberg cried out to his associates, “To work then! God has revealed to me the secret that I demanded of Him.” Gutenberg learned that God does speak, in specific ways, giving direction needed to accomplish any task.

2. The purpose of all guidance is to know the Lord Jesus intimately.

In setting any goal, or carrying out any task, it is important that we know the purpose behind it. Any corporation seeking recognition by a state government must submit a constitution and bylaws explaining their fundamental “reason for being.” As particularly highlighted at the outset of our School of Prayer in Lecture Hall One, the Christian’s “reason for being” is to know the Lord Jesus intimately. Paul spoke of this goal: “...that I may know Him...more deeply and intimately...” (Philippians 3:10, The Amplified Version).

Here is the purpose of all guidance—we are to know the Lord Jesus Christ on an intimate basis, and the only way to know Him in such a manner is to hear Him speak. Rosalind Rinker explains, “We need to learn to pray in His presence and to let Him speak with us, to be in tune with Him until we are willing to hear what He has to say to us. (38/40)

3. God speaks from where He dwells.

Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, NKJV). Our Lord was reminding us that the very dwelling place of God is within the human vessel, not just residing in a far-off heaven millions of light years away. Christ made it clear on more than one occasion



that God would dwell within us (John 14:17, 23). Paul also established this fact when he explained, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you...” (I Corinthians 6:19, NIV).

If God dwells within us, then we should expect Him to speak from where He dwells. This eliminates the necessity of having to hear an audible voice to receive guidance. Thus, most guidance we can expect to receive should come by means of a “still small voice” from within through which God speaks. (See 1 Kings 19:12.)

4. The Holy Spirit is heaven’s representative in all true guidance.

Speaking to His disciples just prior to His crucifixion, Jesus declared, “...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13, NKJV). Though it is God who lives within us giving guidance and direction, it is accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit. Further, not only would the Holy Spirit guide, explained Christ, but He actually would speak within, showing us things to come. It is easy to see how valuable this principle is concerning prayer. From time to time the Holy Spirit will reveal, within us, the urgency of a particular need. This may even happen in the middle of the night. In some cases these needs may exist in remote nations thousands of miles away. In my experience in the ministry of Every Home for Christ we have seen miracles happen repeatedly because prayer partners have responded to these inner urgent promptings of the Holy Spirit.



5. *God's Word is the final judge in all guidance.*

As already suggested, nothing is more important to divine guidance than the Word of God. You recall it is one of the three key “harbor lights” in finding the will of God. Without question, God’s Word is the very touchstone of this entire matter of guidance. One author simply labels it “the final judge,” adding, “and that means it must take precedence over our emotions, feelings, impressions, and any other signs or leadings we receive.” (41/14)

Consider the account Peter shares concerning the transfiguration of Jesus. Those with Jesus in the mountain not only saw Moses and Elijah, but they heard the voice of God declare, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (2 Peter 1:17, NKJV). One can hardly imagine what it must have been like being with Jesus during this mountain-top experience. Before the eyes of his disciples Jesus was given a glorified body, exactly like He would receive after His resurrection. This was followed by the audible voice of God, something most Christians have never experienced. But after observing these startling events, Peter makes this amazing statement, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:19, 20, KJV).

Let us especially note the apostle’s words, “We have a more sure word of prophecy!” Peter has seen the glorified body of Jesus and heard God’s audible voice and yet explains that the written Word is even more certain. Charles Spurgeon highlighted this same thought



in a powerful sermon. He said that if on a particular Sunday he should be leaving the sanctuary and an angel from heaven appeared before him in spectacular glory to announce that Charles' name had been recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, he would most certainly answer, "I am pleased that you have come in all your glory to tell me this, but I have a higher authority that tells me I am saved. I have God's Word." God's Word, indeed, is the heart and foundation of all divine guidance.

6. Guidance from God is always accompanied by the peace of God.

Speaking on this principle, Dr. Robert Mumford declares, "One way we can tell the difference between the voice of God and a counterfeit is the sense of peace. The voice which speaks peace is of God; the voice which speaks urgency is either of Satan or comes from your own human nature. God leads; Satan pushes." (41/94)

The Apostle James provides scriptural evidence to support this thought. He declares, "...Wisdom from above is first of all pure [undefiled]; then it is peace-loving, courteous [considerate], gentle" (James 3:17, The Amplified Version). A paraphrase of this verse reads, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure and full of quiet gentleness" (The Living Bible).

Though it is difficult for some Christians to comprehend, Satan will attempt to imitate the voice of God. Missionaries frequently tell of strange dreams, visions and revelations related by witch doctors. It is certain not all "supernatural" experiences originate from God. But one thing is certainly true: Satan cannot counterfeit the peace of God.



Exactly how does this “peace” function in guidance? Paul says in Colossians 3:15, “And let the peace [soul harmony which comes] from Christ rule [act as umpire continually] in your hearts—deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds—in that peaceful state to which as members of Christ’s one body you were also called to live. And be thankful—appreciative, giving thanks to God always” (The Amplified Version).

Note the word “umpire” used in reference to this matter of “peace” in guidance. Peace becomes the true test of divine guidance. Peace is the “umpire.” If there is no inner peace concerning a matter we should question whether God is in it. Of course, this is not to say we will let our emotions dictate our direction. Peace is a quiet attitude of the heart, even when the stomach may churn under the pressures of unfavorable circumstances. It should never be thought of as an emotional feeling. Remember, the devil will try to upset us when we are doing God’s will. But he cannot destroy that inner peace that floods the depth of one’s spiritual being. This is why Paul says, “Don’t worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7, Phillips).

7. God speaks through various means.

The language of God has many voices and the student of prayer should learn to recognize these various ways God communicates. We have already suggested God speaks through His Word. He also may speak in an audible voice. Scripture further describes visions,



dreams, and prophecies as means God may use to give guidance. Numbers 11:25 tells us, “Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to [Moses].” As suggested earlier, God spoke to Elijah through “a still small voice” (I Kings 19:12). In yet another instance the Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard*” (Psalm 19:1-3, NKJV). Here God speaks through His very creation. Thus, the person who takes time to listen in prayer can expect to hear the voice of God in numerous ways.

8. Much guidance from God comes unexpectedly.

Providing insight into this principle of guidance, E. M. Bounds suggests, “Divine guidance means God so moving and impressing the mind, that we shall make wise decisions.” (22) Bounds supports this thought with the Scripture, “He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way” (Psalm 25:9, NIV). In this sense guidance appears to come rather automatically. It simply happens, apart from visions, dreams, or some kind of angelic visitation. This is not to rule out the more unusual forms of divine communication but to assert that God’s guidance may not always follow these dramatic forms. Guidance comes more often in a quiet, automatic leading from God. Christians agree that God knows the beginning from the end. He, alone, knows all the details of the future. We mortals even have difficulty evaluating what has happened in the past, let alone trying to comprehend the future. It is enough that we accept the fact God is with us.



Even before we knew Him, God had His guiding hand upon us (Jeremiah 1:3-4; Psalm 139:15-16). We met no conditions nor followed any set of principles. We didn't even believe. It is much like the ancient king, Cyrus. He was not one of God's people and yet God said to him; "I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by name *Am* the God of Israel" (Isaiah 45:2-4, NKJV).

Twice God told Cyrus He had led him, adding, "though you have not known me" (v.4). And though Cyrus was not a "believer" as such, he was given divine direction so as to help fulfill God's plan. This is an example of automatic, "unconscious" guidance—a form of guidance occurring very frequently for followers of Jesus.

9. Not all forms of guidance come from God.

A careful evaluation of the subject of guidance reveals there are at least three basic sources for guidance, and not all are to be trusted. First, there is guidance from God, which is what we desire. But, secondly, there is guidance that may originate from our flesh. Finally, there is guidance that may come directly from Satan. In other words, there are three voices in the matter of guidance. God may speak, Satan may speak, and our flesh may speak. This means it is possible that any inner voice we hear may not be the voice of God at all, but could be the voice of Satan or our fleshly nature trying to dictate our actions.



Various circumstances leave the believer particularly vulnerable to the latter two voices. Take, for example, the man who may desire a new automobile when God knows his present automobile is sufficient. Let us suppose this person prays, “God, should I purchase this new car?” A quick, inward impression might come: “Yes, you deserve a new car!” Now, it would be a serious mistake for the man to take this message as an indication from the Lord to purchase the new automobile. The evidence would actually suggest self had spoken.

In some cases Satan also may speak to an individual, hoping to prompt that person to make a decision contrary to God’s will. We must guard against all forms of deceptive guidance in the same way Christ resisted Satan in the wilderness. He attacked Satan with God’s Word (Matthew 4:1-11).

Perhaps the most concise biblical plan for handling these questionable voices is found in James 4:7. The apostle declares, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (NKJV).

Here we note three clear steps involved in finding and doing God’s will. First, we must submit to God. This is the first important step in receiving divine guidance. Prior to any inner listening we must willingly submit to what God knows is best. When we have honestly accomplished this, we will have dealt a deadly blow to the voice of “self.”

Secondly, the Bible says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” In this step we deal swiftly with Satan by means of the power of prayer and the authority of God’s Word.



Finally, James entreats, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” After we have dealt with the voices of self and Satan, we need only to draw near to God, through prayer, to hear His guiding voice, even if that voice is a heart impression. But the process of resisting Satan and drawing near to God is only made possible when we have learned to submit ourselves to God. Submission appears to be the more difficult matter in seeking guidance, though it is not impossible to learn.

When the Countess of Huntingdon was asked by Lord Bolingbroke how she could pray such earnest prayers and yet remain submitted to the divine will, the countess quietly answered, “My Lord, that is a matter of no difficulty. If I were a courtier of some generous king, and he gave me permission to ask any favor I pleased of him, I should be sure to put it thus, ‘Will your majesty be graciously pleased to grant me such-and-such a favor; but at the same time though I very much desire it, if it would in any way detract from your majesty’s honor, or if in your majesty’s judgment, it should seem better that I did not have this thing, I shall be quite as content to go without it as to receive it.’ So you see, I might earnestly offer a petition, and yet I might submissively leave it in the king’s hands.” (34/13)

Like the Countess of Huntingdon, George Müller came to grips with this vital matter of submission in relationship to finding the will of God. On his list of six steps to determining the will of God, the first deals clearly with this matter of submission. The others fall into place only after the first is strictly maintained.



- A. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter.
- B. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
- C. I seek the will of the Spirit through, or in connection with, the Word of God.
- D. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
- E. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.
- F. Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge. (45/84,85)

10. *Hearing God speak must prompt us to action.*

The receiving of all guidance from God must ultimately lead to action. The will of God involves doing. When we become aware God is speaking, we can do one of two things. We may respond favorably to God's directive, or ignore it. Moses, Abraham, Ananias, and Isaiah all provide a pattern for the proper response. When God called each of these, they answered, "Here am I." (See Exodus 3:4; Genesis 22:1; Acts 9:10; Isaiah 6:8.) On the other hand, we will always find some like Adam or Jonah who fled from the presence of God (Genesis 3:9; Jonah 1:3).



11. *Divine guidance results in meeting God's conditions.*

On hundreds of occasions throughout Scripture, God promises blessings for those who meet certain conditions. There are, in fact, some 1,500 conditional clauses in God's Word. (One of the more familiar is 2 Chronicles 7:14.) We see these "if clauses" frequently used in conjunction with divine guidance.

For example, through the prophet Isaiah, God promises continual guidance for those who will meet the condition of generosity. Isaiah declared, "If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; and you shall be as a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail" (Isaiah 58:10, 11, NKJV).

Note especially Isaiah's expression, "and the Lord shall guide you continually." This is in reference to constant guidance. But in order to receive it, we must "extend our soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul." Continual guidance, then, is conditional. To be led by God, we must obey God.

12. *Divine guidance does not mean we will know the future.*

Dr. Mumford, in his book *Take Another Look at Guidance*, relates an interesting story about a young boy who watches a passing parade through a tiny knothole in a tall fence. Because he cannot see the entire parade, it may become confusing to him. If he should see a clown, he will be excited and full of joy. But if he



sees a lion, he will be frightened. And if there is a great distance between the band and the acrobats, the child might assume the parade is over. Even worse, if someone should stand in front of the knothole, the boy will see nothing.

But, then, as Mumford explains, let us suppose the boy hears the voice of his older brother calling. Earlier he climbed atop someone's lofty roof and now he beckons his brother to come. He explains, "You can see much better up here."

We can well imagine the look in the little boy's eyes as he scampers up a makeshift ladder to rooftop level where he catches a vision of the entire street below. Now he sees the entirety of the parade; the beginning, the middle, and the end. He is looking from a completely new perspective.

In this matter of seeking divine guidance we must recognize that a good deal of our view will be of the knothole nature. God rarely reveals details of the future to His children because they usually tend to weaken rather than strengthen our faith. We need only look at our past to see how wise this is on the part of God. If we had known ten years in advance of that stroke or death in the family, including the exact day it was to happen, we would have lived those ten years in horror. It would have consumed much of our thinking. God may someday choose to give us more of a "rooftop view" of all that has happened in the past, with the whys and wherefores, but for now we must trust Him to lead us one step at a time. We remember that James explained, "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the



perseverance of Job, and seen the end *intended* by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (James 5:10–11, NKJV). James’ expression “the end of the Lord” means the end result of God’s working in a person. We must be content with the actions of God on our behalf at any given time and trust that all He does is for that all-important “end result.” Let us not demand of God details of the future when He has promised to be with us as those circumstances unfold. Always remember, tomorrow is not here yet, but God is already there!

13. Guidance is not always pleasant.

Not only does God sometimes keep specific details from us, as suggested above, but at times the directions given might seem unpleasant. It is important we remember that God always looks from above, carefully observing every detail. Scripture declares, “‘My thoughts are completely different from yours,’ says the LORD, ‘And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:8–9, NLT). Because God knows everything, and we know relatively little, He may give us instructions that seem contrary to our nature or the circumstances. We must be content to let God guide us in the way He chooses.

14. Guidance is a skill to be learned.

As stated, the real purpose of guidance centers in finding God’s will and blending ourselves with that will, thus allowing it to become our mandate for daily living. The crux of prayer, then, is to develop such a relationship with God that our two wills become one. Prayer must never be an attempt to manipulate God. On the contrary,



in prayer we have come to learn, through experience, God's "marching orders" concerning our part in His plan. In this regard, guidance is a skill to be learned. It is to master and apply certain principles that actually work. Donald Demaray agrees: "We must learn the law of the inner voice. The regular quiet time is the laboratory for developing that capacity to 'hear.'" (26/41)

No believer is born into the kingdom of God with instant spiritual abilities that guarantee some kind of infallible capacity to hear God speak. Spiritual growth is generally developed an inch at a time. We can expect to make mistakes in this matter of seeking guidance, but we must always remember God is ever present, ministering His patient love to all His children.



Lecture Hall Seven

STUDY HALL THREE

DANGERS AHEAD

Like the hindrances that clutter prayer's path to power, the road of divine guidance is marked with obstacles that frequently obstruct the way. Only by recognizing these dangers, and dealing with them swiftly, can we be assured that a particular directive received is really from God. Here are some dangers to be aware of:

1. Danger one: To assume all guidance originates with God.

Because there are three potential voices a child of God can hear, as mentioned earlier, and since only one can be the true voice of God, there is statistically a two-thirds chance that any direction received by hearing an inner voice or receiving an impression might not be from God at all. As Jessie Penn-Lewis suggests, "Always recognize that God has His will for you, and the devil has a 'will' for you, and you have also your own will." (37/12,13) Because of this, Satan will constantly thrust thoughts contrary to God's will in the direction of the believer's mind. We must be careful to remember not every messenger to the believer's mind has been sent by God.



2. Danger two: To think God only uses spectacular means to give His guidance.

Some Christians, unfortunately, have been convinced that all true guidance only comes through unusual means. These persons will not act until they've had a vision, talked to an angel, or experienced some kind of a powerful dream. Because many believers seldom experience these spectacular forms of guidance, they seldom act. Their laziness, or lack of action, is sadly justified by the statement, "God hasn't spoken to me yet."

Even when a unique dream or vision does occur, an added danger presents itself. The recipient may tend to spend more time talking about his vision than doing something about it. In a true vision, however, the emphasis is always on "doing" and never on "talking." When Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, it was a spectacular revelation for a specific purpose. Jesus did not say, "Lay there in the dust for the rest of your life, Saul, and enjoy this vision." On the contrary, Jesus declared, "Now stand up! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and my witness. You are to tell the world about this experience and about other times I will appear to you" (Acts 26:16, NLT).

Though we caution believers not to assume all true guidance demands a spectacular means to reveal it, yet God is still sovereign in His dealings. A sovereign God has the right to speak in any manner He chooses. Visions, dreams, angels, and even an audible voice on some occasions may well be His choice when dealing with His children. A good motto to follow in this entire matter is "let God be God!"



3. Danger three: To bargain with God such as basing guidance on fleeces.

Most Bible students recall the familiar account of Gideon's call to service in Judges. (See Judges 6:11-16.) It was God's plan to mightily use one of the weakest vessels in all of Israel. Although God was clearly leading him, Gideon decided to put a "fleece" before the Lord. In the Amplified Version we read these words of Gideon, "If you will deliver Israel by my hand as You have said, Behold I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will deliver Israel by my hand, as You have said" (Judges 6:36-37).

In studying the above passage we note that Gideon twice declared, "As you have said." In other words, God had already spoken rather clearly concerning Gideon's future. But because Gideon doubted his calling, he wanted to put a test before God. It was simply a lack of trust that prompted Gideon in this matter. God, of course, was with Gideon just as He is with us today.

The following morning when Gideon checked the fleece, sure enough, it was saturated with moisture. God had responded even in Gideon's weak faith. Yet, Gideon remained reluctant to report to the army barracks to receive his general's uniform. Instead, he went back to prayer and begged God to repeat the miracle.

For added assurance Gideon prayed: "Let not your anger be kindled against me, and I will speak but this once; let me make trial only this once with the fleece, I pray; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew" (Judges 6:39, The Amplified Version).



Again God was patient with Gideon and dealt carefully with him. The miracle was performed and Gideon eventually went forth in God's power to witness one of Israel's greatest victories in battle. Three hundred conquered an army of many thousands.

But a lesson remains for all who would seek guidance from God by the means of using fleeces. In many cases we put a fleece before God because we lack trust. Further, an especially great danger in this matter concerns "self" entering into the fleece. We tend to make the "fleece" rather easy if we want a particular thing and difficult if we are afraid of a particular course of action. An absurd example would be if we wanted to purchase a new, very expensive automobile, and we prayed something like this: "Lord, if this is truly your will, let the sun be shining sometime tomorrow!" Obviously one knows that the sun has an almost 100% chance of breaking through the clouds sometime the next day, so the fleece really suggests the person making it wants a particular outcome. Thus, there is a considerable danger in assuming that using "fleeces" is the good way to receive or confirm divine guidance. It may be one way to confirm guidance, but it is certainly not the best. God's Word remains best.

4. Danger four: To treat voices and visions above God's Word.

There will always be some believers who elevate the spectacular aspects of divine guidance above the Word of God itself. Nothing obscuring the path to God could be more dangerous. John Wesley warns: "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions or revelations to be from God. They may be from Him, they may be from nature, they



may be from the devil. Therefore, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be from God.” (41/8)

We have established that Satan’s goals are to frustrate and deceive Christians as they try to do the will of God. Because God’s Word is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17), and, thus, our chief weapon to attack Satan, our enemy fears the Word of God with a special intensity. To Satan it matters not that we see visions, have dreams, talk with angels, and hear voices, as long as we keep the Word out of it all. Satan knows that without a foundation in God’s Word he can ultimately deceive us. We recall Martin Luther’s powerful third stanza to his anthem “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”:

And tho this world, with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The price of darkness grim—
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo his doom is sure—
One little word shall fell him.

5. Danger five: To misunderstand circumstances in relationship to receiving guidance.

Circumstances, as suggested earlier, are frequently an important factor in seeking divine guidance, though such occasions can sometimes be greatly misleading. One writer suggests that circumstances might be misinterpreted in at least four basic ways. These include: (1) “God is putting me through a test,” (2) “I am being punished for my disobedience,” (3) “The devil is after me,” (4) “I’m being persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” (41/106)



The danger in becoming too “circumstance conscious” in seeking divine guidance occurs when we fail to understand that God sometimes uses circumstances to help us mature. We may think we are out of God’s will as the going becomes difficult, when, in reality, it may be that God is working in us to perfect His will. We remember how Jesus commanded His disciples to sail their boat across the Sea of Galilee. He would later meet them on the other side. As the boat neared the middle of the sea, however, a horrible storm approached, tossing the boat like a feather in the wind. It was frightening. No doubt some of the disciples inwardly wondered why Jesus had sent them into the storm. After all, Jesus was the Messiah and should know everything. Had He made a mistake? But suddenly Christ Himself appeared walking on the water. He had used this troubling situation to reveal His power in a supernatural way (Matthew 14:22-25). The lesson to us today is clear; just because we find ourselves in a storm doesn’t mean we are necessarily out of God’s will. Christ, who “knew all things,” surely realized a storm was brewing. Indeed, there is reason to believe He purposely sent His disciples into that storm. He had a principle to teach them. No matter their circumstances, He is always present and in charge.

It is always important to remember God uses many difficult circumstances regarding His children in order to reveal Himself. This is Christ’s way to mature His children. He doesn’t take away the storm; He walks with us through the storm.



6. *Danger six: To rule out any need for divine guidance.*

There is a final danger concerning this matter of seeking divine guidance. Perhaps it is the greatest danger of all because it is the most subtle of those obstacles along the path to finding God's will. There are those believers who feel far removed from any need to hear God speak. They are quite content to remain "independent" when it comes to spiritual matters. Without realizing it, however, their Christian life is slowly becoming directionless. More and more they miss the mark spiritually. Or, as one writer suggests, they miss the mark because they don't know what the mark is. They are like the man who jumps into the taxi yelling, "Take me there!"

No follower of Jesus can function effectively without God's help. This is why the whole matter of prayer—as well as that of divine guidance—is so essential, not only to our personal spiritual growth, but to the salvation of the world. The student of prayer has the greatest, most meaningful field of service anyone could be given.



Lecture Hall Seven

STUDY HALL FOUR

THE KEY TO DIVINE GUIDANCE

One of Scripture's most basic lessons on receiving ongoing divine guidance is Proverbs 3:5-6. It was one of the first Bible passages I recall memorizing as a youth:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct your paths. (NKJV)

Hidden in this passage is one of Scripture's truly great lessons on the role of spiritual intimacy in receiving God's guidance for all matters in life.

We are first admonished to "trust in the Lord" with *all* our hearts. This speaks of implicit surrender. Trust means that we allow someone to act on our behalf without being afraid or having misgivings.

We are next cautioned to guard against personal opinions that may bend us toward human reasoning in the decision-making process. "Lean not on your own understanding," we're advised. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*, reads: "...don't try to figure out everything on your own." Finally, we are instructed to "acknowledge" the Lord unconditionally in all our "ways."



Two words in this passage are especially significant in this matter of spiritual intimacy: *ways* and *acknowledge*. “In all your ways,” we are told, “acknowledge Him.”

The word *ways* is derived from the Hebrew expression *Derek*, meaning “a road, a course (such as a course of life), or a mode of action.” This pictures a path or course that affords passage from one place to another. *Derek* also refers to a way of life, or the essence of one’s lifestyle. It can include very specific opportunities a person may encounter on a recurring basis. Thus, this passage may well be suggesting “In all your *opportunities*, *acknowledge* God.”

Naturally, one of the most recurring segments of opportunity experienced by believers on a regular basis is the dawning of each new day. Every day is filled with fresh opportunities. It is almost as if this passage is suggesting, “In all your *days* acknowledge God.” The thought is that if we’ll just acknowledge God daily, applying all that this word *acknowledge* means, we are promised wisdom and direction for our steps. This is guidance guaranteed. The promise concludes: “He will direct your paths,” or, as the NIV translates this phrase, “make your paths straight.”

The *Yada* Factor

But we will discover hidden in this passage the real secret to this entire subject of seeking divine guidance, and, for that matter, the true essence of all effective praying. It is found in the Hebrew word translated “acknowledge”—*yada*. Elsewhere in the Old Testament *yada* is most frequently translated “know.”



Generally, *yada* refers to someone possessing knowledge of another individual, place or circumstance. It is to know a person or thing. The word *yada*, however, employs a variety of definitions that, when taken as a whole, significantly enhances its contextual use in Proverbs 3:6. *Yada*, for example, also means to know someone or something by means of observation, investigation, reflection or firsthand experience. At times *yada* represents an even higher level of knowing—a knowledge of a person that is gained only from direct intimate contact. In fact, *yada* at this level speaks more of a heart intimacy than it does of a head knowledge.

The word *intimate* and *contact* are essential to our understanding of what the writer of this passage (Proverbs 3:4-5) may well have had in mind when he penned these words. Could he have been speaking of touching God intimately rather than just acknowledging our Creator's existence?

Elsewhere in Scripture Daniel employed the same expression, *yada*, when he wrote, "...the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*" (Daniel 11:32, NKJV). Note the qualities Daniel mentioned that accompany those who truly know God. First, they will be strong. The word *strong* means "firm and durable." Then, they will accomplish great exploits. *Exploits* means "bold deeds and daring acts." But all of this is predicated on knowing God.

In using this word, *yada*, translated here as simply "know," Daniel obviously was referring to much more than a casual knowledge of God. In a New Testament sense, Daniel was even going beyond the new birth experience in using the term *yada*. This is not to suggest that some are more "saved" than others, but it is to



suggest that some believers have more power than others. Followers of Jesus may be born again but yet never rise to accomplish “bold deeds” or “daring acts” as the result of their Christian commitment.

Perhaps when Daniel, as well as the author of the third chapter of Proverbs, used the word *yada* in their messages, they had in mind one of the earliest usages of the term *yada* in Hebrew culture.

The Genesis record provides this example: “Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived...” (Genesis 4:1, italics added). Here the word *yada*, translated “knew,” is referring to sexual intimacy that leads to conception. The NIV translates this passage, “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived.” “Lay” here may have been deemed appropriate by the translators, but it is weak in its totality of meaning. A better translation may have been “Adam held his wife Eve intimately, and she conceived.” *Yada*, in this sense, pictures the closest intimacy possible in the human relationship. A baby is conceived because two people, in love, hold on to each other intimately.

Looking again at the Daniel passage, the use of the word *yada* suggests that only those who touch God intimately will ever truly accomplish bold deeds and daring acts (Daniel 11:32).

The use of the expression *yada* when we see it in the Proverbs passage, then, becomes especially significant. It suggests that after we’ve fully submitted to God in total trust, and we’ve firmly rejected our own human ways of reasoning, the final key to receiving absolute guidance in all we do is to maintain daily, intimate contact with the Lord. “In all your ways



acknowledge Him” clearly suggests, “In all your opportunities, touch God intimately.” Simply stated, *yada* with God (that is, intimate contact with him daily) is the key factor in receiving continuous guidance from God. *Yada* is also the key to conceiving and birthing our dreams and desires. Thus, *yada*, a word we highlighted in our very first Lecture Hall, is the essence of all meaningful praying. Those who know God intimately, through Jesus Christ, make the most effective intercessors.

Nothing, then, is more fundamental and foundational to understanding and applying prayer than sitting at the feet of Jesus in an ongoing School of Prayer and experiencing a daily *yada* encounter with Him. Further, one never really graduates from this specialized school; he or she just learns more and more and constantly applies what is learned.

Thus, having read these pages isn't to say you've graduated from this School of Prayer; only that you have now enrolled. Your diploma will be awarded in heaven! I have often begun the live lectures of those Change the World Schools of Prayer I've personally taught by saying, “Welcome to the only study you may ever attend that actually begins after it is over!”

So, retire to your prayer closet or bedroom, or wherever you have chosen to meet with the Master daily, and enroll in the real School of Prayer. There is something new to learn and experience this very day. Don't miss it!



PRACTICAL PRAYER HELPS

You have now completed a study of the most important subject in the world for followers of Jesus—PRAYER!

Now the truly important work begins—that of the practice of prayer itself.

Following are several recommendations to help you continue in a scriptural study of prayer.

1. Once you have read through this guide a first time you may wish to go through it again more slowly. Follow the suggested Change the World School of Prayer 13-week check list that follows to help you go at a pace that helps you study the material more carefully. If you are faithful this will take you approximately three months to finish and will require only about 10 or 15 minutes each day. (Do this in addition to your regular times of prayer.)
2. Take a few extra minutes each day to look up the Bible verses shared in the study. Write out key phrases from each verse in the space allocated for this purpose after each Study Hall. You can do the same regarding important thoughts in quotations from past prayer giants. Journal your impressions of each particular Study Hall.
3. Set a goal of reading a new book on prayer once every month or two. Visit Every Home for Christ's website, www.ehc.org, for recommendations.



4. Prayer is relatively shallow until we have a specific focus for prayer. This is why I recommend intercessors use prayer guides from evangelism ministries such as Every Home for Christ's Daily Prayer Watch published monthly. Each day of a particular month different global prayer focuses are shared. Various ministries have similar guides. (For more information about receiving EHC's guide write to Every Home for Christ or visit our website.)
5. Become a prayer mobilizer by enlisting others. You may wish to provide a friend the personal CTWSOP DVD Course. (For details write our EHC office or visit our website). Above all, be faithful in prayer daily for the evangelized world. Especially pray for the Islamic and Communist nations that have been deprived of spiritual food for decades and even centuries.

CHANGE THE WORLD SCHOOL OF PRAYER

13-week Personal Study Outline

As stated earlier, *The Change the World School of Prayer* is unique among seminars in that it really begins after it is over. Little was accomplished for the unevangelized overseas merely from studying these pages. What really counts is what one does in the days and months to come in applying these concepts during the actual practice of prayer itself. Because this book is so intense in its many quotes and insights, we recommend you give three months to a more careful study of its contents. Sometime soon begin your more intensive three-month study of the entire manual using the following guide. (Check off each Lecture Hall and Study Hall as you complete it).



WEEK ONE

LECTURE HALL ONE

Study Halls:

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- 2 Pages 25-34
- 3 Pages 35-40
- 4 Pages 41-49

WEEK TWO

LECTURE HALL TWO

Study Halls:

- 1 Pages 53-62
- 2 Pages 63-70
- 3 Pages 71-78
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WEEK THREE

LECTURE HALL THREE

Study Halls:

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WEEK FOUR

LECTURE HALL THREE (Continued)

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WEEK FIVE

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WEEK SIX

LECTURE HALL THREE (Continued)

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WEEK SEVEN

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WEEK EIGHT

LECTURE HALL FOUR

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WEEK NINE

LECTURE HALL FOUR (Continued)

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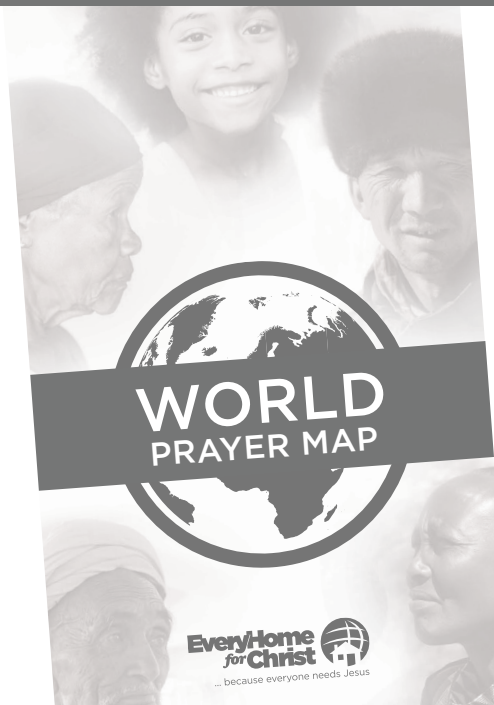
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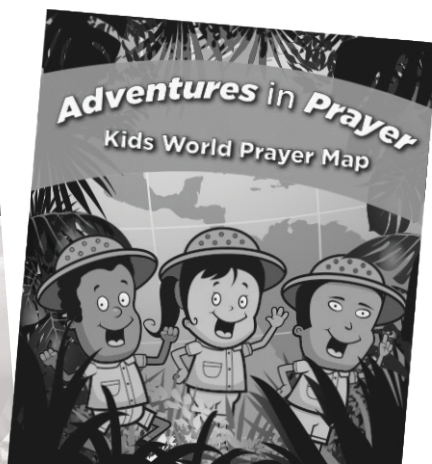
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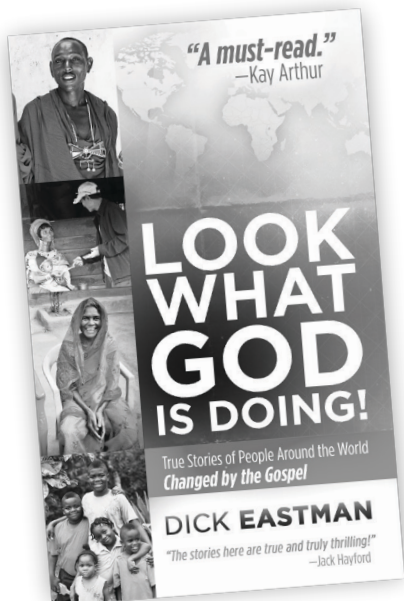
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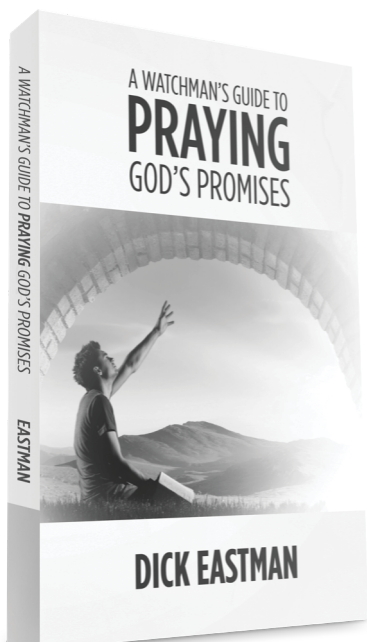
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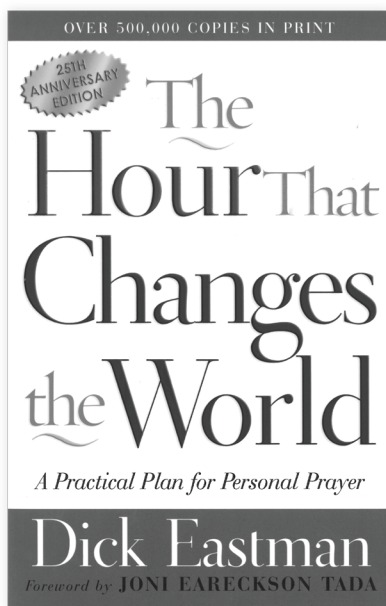


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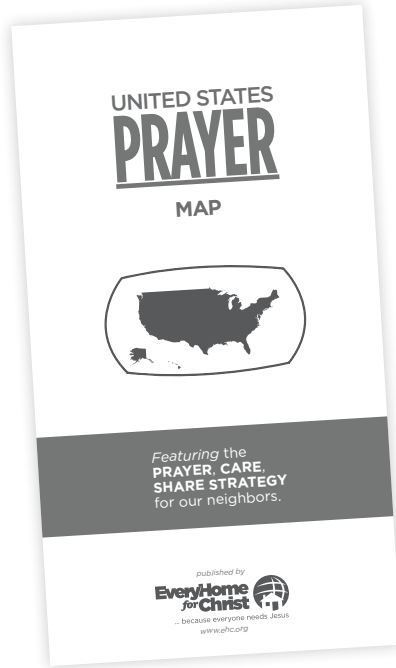
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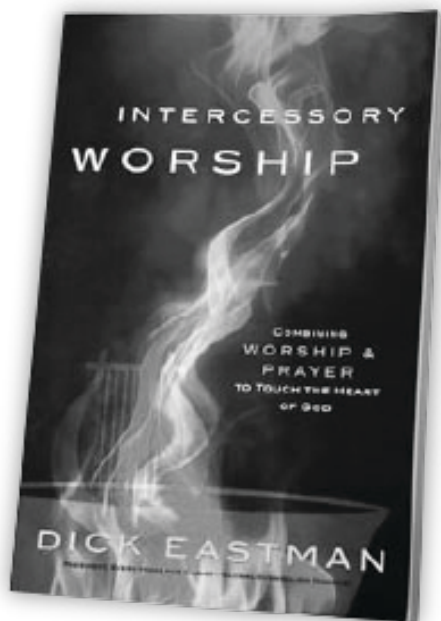
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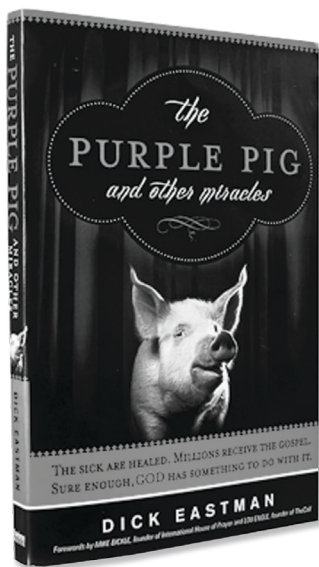
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