



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



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Footprints into Africa

PRAYER

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

With Christ in the school of prayer	- A. Murray
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Only in a prayer meeting	- C.H Spurgeon
Prayer	- J. Bunyan
The valley of vision	

WHAT TRUE PRAYER IS

STUDY 1

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 66:17-18 "I cried to Him with my mouth."

Jer.29:12-13 "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart."

Matt.7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you: seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened."

1 Jn.5:14 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

There is no doubt that prayer is the most important aspect of our lives, Lord teach us how to pray was the cry of those apostles. There are seven characteristics of true prayer.

J. Bunyan: "Prayer is a sincere, sensible affectionate pouring out of the heart or the soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, all according to His Word, for the good of the Church, with submission in faith to the will of God."

1. PRAYER IS A SINCERE POURING OUT OF THE SOUL TO GOD.

Sincerity is very critical in my prayer life (Hos.7:14. Jer.29:12-13)

Sincerity will mean that I will come in all simplicity to God and open up my heart to God.

J. Bunyan: "Simplicity is the same whether in a corner or before the face of the world, it knows not how to wear a mask."

2. IT IS THE SENSIBLE POURING OUT OF MY HEART.

It is not mere emotion.

A. It is a sense of the need of God's mercy because of my sin.
(Ps.38:8-10, Is. 38:13, Matt 26:17.)

B. It also brings a sense of mercy received and this encourages, comforts and strengthens the believer (Ps.103:1-4)

C. There is a sense of mercy still to be received in the future (2 Sam.7:27)

3. THE AFFECTIONATE POURING OUT OF THE SOUL TO GOD. (Ps.42:1, Ps.119:40, Ps. 84:2)

And so in my prayers I am to pray with affectionate devotion to my Father.
Do not ever be satisfied with little lip service.

A. It is a pouring out of soul (Ps. 42:2-4)

B. To God the father (1 Tim. 5:5)

C. Through Christ (Jn.14:6, Heb.11:6)

J. Bunyan: “Now we come to God in Christ’s merit, in his blood, righteousness, victory, intercession and we stand before God accepted in the beloved.”

4. **WITH THE STRENGTH AND ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**
(Rom 8:26-27)

5. **FOR SUCH THINGS AS GOD HAS PROMISED IN HIS WORD.**
This reminds us that prayer is only true prayer when it is within the compass of God’s Word, in fact it is blasphemy or vain babbling when our prayers are unrelated to the Book. (Ps.119:25-28, v.41-42, v.58, v.74, v.81-82, v.147, v.169, v.170)

6. **WHEN IT IS FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH**
This means it must lead to the honour of God, to the advancement of Christ’s kingdom and the benefit of God’s people. (Php. 1:9-11, Eph.1:16-21, 3:14-19, Col. 1:9-13).

7. **TRUE PRAYER ALWAYS SUBMITS TO THE SOVERIGN WILL OF GOD**
(1 Jn. 5:14-15, 1 Cor 2:11)

SUMMARY

A. Judson. “I am persuaded that we are all more deficient in the spirit of prayer than in any other grace, God loves prayer so much that He will not give us much blessing without it and the reason he loves such prayer is that He loves us.”

PRAYER
STUDY 2

JEREMIAH AND THE GOLDEN KEY TO PRAYER
(Jeremiah 33:1-3)

INTRODUCTION

Some of the most devotional books ever written were from prison:

Pilgrim's Progress - J. Bunyan

The cost of discipleship - Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

It is the same with prayer:

Spurgeon "Those who dive into the sea of affliction bring up rare jewels."

One of the most wonderful illustrations is **Jeremiah**.

1 WHO GAVE THE PROMISE TO JEREMIAH - It came from the Lord

A. WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH

B. WHO FORMED IT

These titles of maker and former trace us back to **Gen 1**. The Lord does what he says and forms what he wants to make. The Lord spoke to Jeremiah..

2. TO WHOM WAS THIS GIVEN

While Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guard, God gave this promise to Jeremiah during one of the darkest periods in Judah's history. The kingdom of Judah was hastening to its end. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were soon to destroy everything, the city of Jerusalem, the Temple and thousands of their people were taken away into exile. While all this was happening, Jeremiah was in prison, the nation is doomed, and he is discouraged. While he is down in that bleak prison cell God spoke to a broken man. **"The Word of the Lord came to him a second time."**

1. PRAYER IS COMMANDED - Call unto me

Notice this is not a recommendation from God it is a command.

A. GOD KNOWS WE GO THROUGH FITS OF WORLDLINESS

We do not forget to eat or to work but we do forget to pray. So often God's people are worldly and forget to pray, it is a case of hours for the world, but a moment for prayer.

B. GOD KNOWS THAT SOMETIMES OUR HEARTS ARE HEAVY.

For God's people often their circumstances are so difficult that they will say, "Will God answer me?" Other times Satan tells us we are so bad God will not hear us anyway.

C. GOD KNOWS OF OUR UNBELIEF AT TIMES.

We imagine that it is a trivial thing to bring to God.

2. ANSWER IS PROMISED - "And I will answer you".

A. HIS NATURE DEMANDS IT

God has revealed himself as a God of love, full of grace and truth. He will never refuse his children.

B. HIS DEALINGS IN THE PAST

If the Lord listened to you when you were a guilty sinner, how much more will he listen to you as one of his children

Spurgeon: "You misread Calvary if you think that prayer is useless."

C. BECAUSE OF HIS OWN PROMISE.
God's promises are given to encourage us to pray.

D. OUR OWN EXPERIENCE

3. **ENCOURAGEMENTS** - "And I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know".

A. CHRISTIAN TEACHERS. (Sunday School/ Young Adults/ Youth Work)
The best way for you and I to grow in our knowledge of God is on our knees in prayer. **Luther:** "To have prayed well is to have studied well."

B. TO DISCIPLES.
We may expect deeper experiences and a higher spiritual life if we are much in prayer; we need to teach new converts how to pray.

C. TO THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING OR BEING TESTED.

D. TO ALL CHRISTIAN WORKERS.
We need to work hard as if all depended on us, but then we need to pray hard without which everything is in vain.

CONCLUSION

E.M. Bounds: "The Church today needs praying people to carry out the pressing responsibility of meeting the fearful crises which faces her today. The crying need of our day is for praying people in increased numbers who count but less for the excellency of knowing Jesus Christ. Praying men are the only men who have influence with God, the only kind of men to whom God commits himself and his Gospel."

PRAYER
STUDY 3

PASSION IN PRAYER
(1 Kings 18:41-46)

INTRODUCTION

God's man for the hour is always the one who has mastered prayer. Because of his prayer, Elijah shines for God during one of the darkest hours of Israel's history. After the death of Solomon the kingdom split in two Rehoboam led the south, Jeroboam led the north. Wanting to keep the people together he erected two altars one at Dan and the other at Bethel. At both places he erected a golden calf and terrible apostasy resulted. After his death many revolutions followed until eventually, King Omri took over and following him King Ahab. **(1 Kings 16:33)**, priests of God were killed and the prophets were hunted. It was the darkest hour in Israel's history. Into that situation, Elijah came and he summoned all the false prophets to a contest on Mount Carmel where Elijah showed the people that God is God alone. Three and a half years have passed and Elijah is praying.

1. ELIJAH WITHDREW FROM THE CROWDS. (v.42)

While Ahab went to eat and drink, Elijah returned alone to the top of Mount Carmel and there alone he prayed to God. The greatest example of prayer is Jesus **(Mark 1:35)**

2. ELIJAH'S POSTURE IN PRAYER

He bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. One hardly recognizes Elijah here, when he was on the top of Mount Carmel he stood erect with courage, but now he is on his face before God. Facing the force of Baal he was bold. But alone with God he was aware of his nothingness, a symbol of his humility, reverence and nothingness.

3. ELIJAH BASED ALL HIS PRAYERS ON THE PROMISES (Word) OF GOD

For you and I our prayer life and our reading of the Scriptures go together and we are able to base our prayers on these wonderful promises for example **(Ps.2:8) "Ask me and I will give you the nations as thy inheritance."**
(Matt 7:7, Jer. 33:3)

4. ELIJAH'S PRAYERS WERE DEFINITE (v.36-37, James 5:17)

Be more specific and definite.

5. ELIJAH IS ABSOLUTELY EARNEST (James 5:17)

It was never half hearted or mechanical, never cold and formal and lifeless, he was passionate.

6. **ELIJAH'S PRAYERS WERE FULL OF EXPECTANT FAITH** (v.43)

Elijah is so confident that God will answer his prayer that he tells his servant to go and see. **F.B. Myer:** “There is a faith which God cannot refuse, to which all things are possible which laughs at impossibility and which can remove mountains and plant them into the sea.”

7. **ELIJAH PERSEVERED** (v.43)

For seven times Elijah ordered his servant to go back. Initially there was only a little cloud, but then there was a heavy wind and then there was an abundant answer and a tremendous rainstorm

CONCLUSION.

James tells us that an effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

F.B. Myer: “What the church needs today is not more programmes, not new organizations, not more methods, but more prayer.”

PRAYER
STUDY 4

GROPING IN PRAYER
(Job 23:1-5)

INTRODUCTION

Without any doubt, Job is one of the most wonderful books ever written.

Tennyson “The greatest poem whether in ancient or modern literature.”

1. WHAT A GODLY MAN JOB WAS (1:1)

In that verse God said of Job he was perfect, upright, a man who feared God and a man who shunned evil. In **1:8** God said there was no one like him in all the earth.

2. WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

As the book opens Job is surrounded by wealth, family, position and friends. When suddenly everything was removed from him, his wealth was stripped away, his children died, his health was gone and his wife said, “Curse God and die”.

In his uttermost extremity, he cries out for God and he says in v.3 “**If only I knew how to find him.**”

Spurgeon: “A hypocrite when he feels that he has been afflicted by God resents the infliction and like a slave runs away from his master, but not the true heir to heaven.”

His cry for God was intensified by the failure of his friends to comfort him, they were Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu

1. JOB’S PRAYERS WERE ORDERED.

“I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.” With our prayers it is important that they be well structured and planned. **Spurgeon:** “God forbid that our prayers should be a mere leaping out of ones bed and kneeling down and saying anything that comes first to hand.” Not only is it important to have a:

- a) Set time
- b) Set place
- c) Always begin with the reading of the Word
- d) You must always have a pattern or go through the Lords Prayer
 - Adoration
 - Confession
 - Thanksgiving
 - Supplication

2. JOB’S PRAYERS WERE FULL OF ARGUMENTS

- a) God’s attributes
E.g. Elijah on the top of Mount Carmel.
- b) The promises of God
Call and I will answer you
- c) The name of God.
Hallowed be thy name
- d) The Past
Lord has provided in the past.
- e) Lord Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 5:14)
Don’t run away or become depressed.

3. **JOB'S PRAYERS HAD RESULTS.**

- a) That time drew Job into a deeper walk with God (v.10)
- b) God heard and answered (Job 42: 10-12)

CONCLUSION

From the above we learn that there will come times in our lives when God may seem to be far away and what is important is never to neglect prayer, do not stop praying, rather like Job bring your ordered request to God with the conviction that God will hear you, and draw you into a closer walk with himself.

PRAYER
STUDY 5

NEHEMIAH - A LIFE OF PRAYER
(Nehemiah 2:4)

BACKGROUND

After Jerusalem had been overrun by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. A large majority of the people were taken into exile including Daniel and Nehemiah. Nehemiah hears of how badly things are going back home, he begins to pray before he embarks on any action and for the next four months it never left his mind. He prayed for an opening to go back home, God answered and in 2:2 the King said to him, "Why are you so sad? Nehemiah immediately prays 2:4, I prayed to God in heaven and then I answered. Notice furthermore how over these four months Nehemiah had carefully prayed about the project, he knew exactly what was needed, his preparation was done on his knees.

1. THE CHALLENGE OF NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

As soon as the King asked why Nehemiah was sad, he prayed.

Spurgeon: "So habitually was Nehemiah's communion with God that as soon as he found himself in a dilemma he flew away to God."

A. HE FELT VERY EAGER ABOUT HIS SUBJECT

B. THE CHALLENGES THAT HE HAD ALREADY BEEN PRAYING FOR, FOR FOUR MONTHS

C. IT TOOK PLACE IN THE KING'S PALACE.

John Wesley: "Have you any days of prayer and fasting, storm the throne of grace and persevere therein and mercy will come down."

2. THE MANNER OF NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

A. IT WAS SHORT

It was slipped in between the King's question and his answer.

Thomas Brookes: "God does not look at the elegance of your prayers, to see how neat they are, nor at the geometry of your prayers to see how long they are, nor at the arithmetic of your prayers to see how many they are, nor at the music of your prayers, nor at the sweetness of your voice, but He looks at the sincerity of your prayers."

B. HIS PRAYERS WERE REMARKABLE

They flowed out of a heart in communion with God.

3. THE LESSONS OF NEHEMIAH'S LIFE OF PRAYER

A. WE OUGHT TO HAVE OUR SET TIMES OF PRAYER

Throughout the history of the church, the men who have illustrated Christ in their character and most powerfully affected the world, have all been men who spent much time with God in prayer each day. E.g. Charles Spurgeon - He prayed every day of his life from 4 – 8 am.

John Wesley - he thought prayer to be his business. John Fletcher.

A. Judson “Arrange the affairs of your life so that you can devote 2 or 3 hours everyday, not merely to devotional exercises but to the very act of secret prayer. Endeavour during your day to withdraw from your business and lift up your soul to God in prayer.”

B. OTHER TIMES WE ARE GOING TO HAVE SHORT QUICK AND FERVENT PRAYERS (1:4, 2:4, 4:9)

Five advantages of fervent prayer:

- i) You can do it anywhere
- ii) It means that you and I are able to pray this often
- iii) In all sorts of surroundings.
- iv) It must be from the heart
- v) And they really bring great blessings.

CONCLUSION

John Bunyan. “Pray often for prayer is a shield to your soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge to Satan.”

PRAYER

STUDY 6

AMBITION IN PRAYER

(1 Chronicles 4:10)

INTRODUCTION

Oswald Saunders: “There is an ambition in prayer which is pleasing to God. He is not honoured by the presenting of minimum requests because we are coming to the throne of a great King, we should honour Him by bringing worthy petitions.

1. **THE REASON FOR HIS NAME.** (v.9)

His mother called her son Jabez because she bore him with sorrow (Gen 3:16)

A. **SHE THANKED GOD FOR HIS SAFE DELIVERY**

This implies that it was an extraordinarily painful birth.

B. **IT WOULD ALWAYS ENABLE JABEZ TO HONOUR HIS MOTHER**

Matthew Henry: “It would always remind him to love and honour his mother, labour in everything to be a comfort to her, who brought him into the world with so much sorrow.

2. **THE EMINENCE OF HIS CHARACTER** (v.9b)

A. **IN LEARNING**

In 1 Cor 2:55 - there was even a city named after him. Jewish tradition tells us that he became a very famous Doctor of Law and he left many disciples.

B. **IN GODLINESS**

It was his prayer life which lifted Jabez above the level of his contemporaries.

Matthew Henry. “The way to be truly great is to pray much.”

3. **THE PRAYER HE MADE.**

A. **TO WHOM DID HE PRAY**

He prayed to the God of Israel. The God who had delivered his forefathers out of Egypt, who had taken them across the Red Sea, who looked after them for 40 years in the desert and who gave them the promised land. He is a God of grace, power and wisdom.

B. **FOR WHAT DID HE PRAY**

i) **Oh! That you would bless me**

Notice it was not for fame or for wealth or for success, he asked for God’s blessing on his life.

ii) **And to enlarge his territory.**

Jabez was not content, he appealed for the extension and enlargement of his territory. This can be applied in our lives in two ways.

a) Our work

b) Our walk with God

Matthew Henry: “God will enlarge our hearts and so enlarge our portion of him”.

iii) **God’s hand to be on him**

- a) That would equip him.
- b) And for his protection.

- iv) That God would keep him from evil
Kept free from the pain of a guilty heart.

C. THE SUCCESS OF HIS PRAYER
“God granted his request”

CONCLUSION

There is a godly ambition in prayer E.g. John Knox. “Give me Scotland or I die.”

PRAYERS
STUDY 7

WORDLESS PRAYER
(1 Samuel 1:1-18)

INTRODUCTION.

History is rich in examples of men and woman who have risen to great heights and later to acknowledge that their success was due to the prayers of their mothers. It was true of Moses. Samson and John the Baptist in the Bible. In Church History, Spurgeon, Billy Graham and Campbell Morgan. **Oswald Sanders** “**Praying Samuels come from praying Hannahs.**” Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the story of Samuel whose entire life was the direct result of his mother’s faith in God, but she will also teach us that God does not only hear the cries from your lips, but he also listens to those unspoken cries from your heart. Wordless prayer.

1. HANNAH’S FAMILY (v.1-8)

A. IT WAS A VERY DEVOUT FAMILY

Elkanah, her husband would attend the solemn feasts at the tabernacle in Shiloh year after year, he would go to worship and to sacrifice. As a father while not without fault he lived a very godly life, not only that he loved Hannah.

- i) In spite of the general decline in the country
- ii) Even though Hophni and Phinehas were the priests.

B. IT WAS A DIVIDED FAMILY

- i) Elkanah had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah.
This was a blatant transgression of the original institution of marriage

ii) Division.

The two wives did not get on E.g.

- a) Different blessings.
Peninnah had children, Hannah did not.
- b) Different personalities
Hannah was a godly loving wife, Peninnah was arrogant and insolent.

iii) Results

- a) She despised Hannah
- b) Jealous of her.
- c) Especially during times of worship

1. HANNAH’S PRAYER (v.9-18)

A. IT WAS IN BITTERNESS OF SOUL (v.9)

Because of the tension with Peninnah she was broken

B. WHEN SHE CAME TO GOD SHE MIXED HER PRAYERS WITH TEARS (v.10)

Matthew Henry. “The prayers came from the heart as the tears came from her eyes.”

C SHE MADE A VOW TO GOD (v.11)

D. THESE PRAYERS WERE ABSOLUTELY WORDLESS (v.12-13)

Hannah's prayer came from the heart, there was nothing on the lips, in her discouragement she could not speak, there was in intensity and earnestness in her prayers.

E. MISUNDERSTOOD

Eli accuses her of being drunk, and urges her to get rid of her wine, but Hannah replies I am pouring my heart out to God.

F. THE RESULTS (v.18)

- i) She was no longer downcast (**Jer. 33:3**)
- ii) She became pregnant (**v.19**)
- iii) She fulfills her vow to God (**v.28**)

CONCLUSION.

There are times in our prayers when like Elijah of old there is a need to be compassionate, other times when we grope like Job, but we long to live a life of prayer like Nehemiah, not to pray small prayers but like Jabez to have ambition in prayer and yet to experience in our difficult times like Hannah of old that God listens to the heart even when we cannot pray with the lips.