

Foreword by Colin Urquhart

JUDITH BUTLER



How to pray

HEAVEN

on EARTH

Book Club Edition

How to Pray Heaven on Earth

(Book Club Edition)

Judith Butler

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First published in 2001

This Book Club edition published in 2026 by Kingdom Faith South West
3-7 The Mount, Taunton, TA1 3NR

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Foreword

What is the point of praying unless you get results? Judith Butler has a very powerful ministry of teaching and leading others in prayer. She has been gifted by God with the ability to motivate others to become praying people, showing them that prayer should be both exciting and rewarding.

This is much more than a book on prayer. With great clarity you will be led step by step into a place of greater faith in God, enabling you to enter into a real and living relationship with Him. You need to know the One to Whom you pray.

Judith Butler covers an amazing amount of ground, giving you the essence of the truth that you need to know, but without wearying you with unnecessary detail! Having laid this good foundation of faith and relationship, she shows you how to approach God so that your prayer life will be both fulfilling and effective. This short book gives clear teaching on how to depend on God's Holy Spirit in prayer and how to exercise authority over the adverse, negative tactics of the enemy.

How to Pray Heaven on Earth is a book by someone with a proven international ministry that will help any who wants to pray more effectively. If you are one of those people who feels a failure at prayer, this is the ideal book for you. It will show you how, by applying simple principles, you can have an effective relationship with God in prayer.

Even if you have been a Christian for many years, there is plenty here that will enrich your prayer life, taking you to a place of greater faith in which you expect God to hear and answer you!

Knowing Judith Butler over many years, and having witnessed the fruit of her ministry, I believe *How to Pray Heaven on Earth* will be an important book to which you will want to refer again and again.

Colin Urquhart
Kingdom Faith
April 2001

Introduction

God is changing the shape of this world through the prayers of His people. He is moving and working through Christians who are praying His will and Kingdom into every situation and circumstance.

However, many Christians today face considerable discouragement and even apathy in prayer - they struggle to succeed and enjoy this vital part of their life with God and are weak because of it.

This book will encourage and stimulate you to see and access the wonderful resources made available to you in Christ. It is practical by nature and full of teaching with revelation that will bring you understanding on how to pray effectively.

God *wants* us to have answers to our prayers! I believe that as you read these pages, the Holy Spirit will revive your vision and faith for a joyful and fruitful prayer life. It is my prayer that the Lord be glorified through your prayers, and as a result, demonstrate who He is to the world.

CHAPTER 1 : CONNECTING WITH GOD

What is prayer?

I want to begin this book by defining and laying some foundations on the subject of prayer. I hope that you will catch how simple, and yet how profound, prayer is. For a Christian, prayer is to be as natural as breathing, and just as vital for life!

Prayer is communication between man and God

God created man to have fellowship or share life with Him and gave every individual ever born an inherent desire to know Him. Discovering what we're created for and why is the path to fulfilment and joy in our lives. Communication with God brings us into our destiny. Through prayer we get to know God and begin to understand why we were created.

God enjoys our company!

The Bible shows us an amazing and life-changing truth. It is God's desire and intention to communicate with mankind! All through the ages God has been calling us to Himself, so strong is His love for us. He actually wants to communicate with us and enjoys our company. This relationship is based on His unfailing and perfect love for us. We can now enter into the most exciting, fulfilling relationship of our lives.

Our relationship with God is only possible because He initiated it: we love Him because He first loved us! (1 John 4:19)

Knowing God through His Word

God's Word shows us His character and will. We must be careful not to make God in our own image based on our experiences in life or our opinion. Prayer is to be based on revelation of the character and will of God through His Word. Have you noticed that our impressions of God can be shaped or influenced by experiences of life? I know that when I first became a Christian, it was difficult for me to accept that it is God's will to heal the sick. My experience did not match up with God's Word and so I

based my opinion on what I had seen. I remember having rather heated discussions with other Christians about this subject. They believed in God's will to heal and trusted His Word. I wanted proof! I have since changed my opinion (thank God) and have chosen to believe God's Word and not my experiences.

Prayer is strong and effective when we pray based on the revelation of God's Word.

Receiving from God

Most of us also know that by asking in prayer we can receive God's help and provision. Children have such a lot to teach us about prayer and relationship with God. When they ask for a drink, they expect to receive it! And if they don't get it the first time they ask, then they will continue asking until they do. I remember taking my five-year-old niece on a three-hour car journey. Within five minutes of leaving the house, she was asking for a drink. Incredible, as she had only just had a drink a moment before! For the sake of my own sanity, I had to stop the car and provide for her request, otherwise I would have heard nothing else for the entire journey!

Jesus told us to ask, seek, and knock until we receive what we ask. This is something we adults need to practise a little more in our prayers - pray until we get it! Of course, the effectiveness of our prayer is based on knowing what God is willing to give. He will not give what is against His will. However, Scripture shows us that God desires to give good things to us. He loves us more than earthly parents love their children and is willing to provide for every need. We are created to know God's power, working in our lives way beyond any natural power. When we need help, we can call on Him and He answers us with supernatural power.

He cares for us and shows His love, answering our prayers!

So, to begin to understand what prayer is, we can say - **prayer is life with God** - knowing Him and His provision in our lives and on the earth. This joy of discovering friendship with God and power through prayer will take commitment both in time and lifestyle for any believer, but the rewards are endless. God has called us to Himself in Christ to know Him and to receive from Him all He longs to give.

Why does God require us to pray?

Have you ever wondered why God waits for us to ask Him for things He has already decided to give? When Jesus was teaching his disciples about prayer, He said that God already knows what we need before we ask.

'...for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.' (Matthew 6:8)

It is comforting to know that our needs never take God by surprise! He knows everything about us, down to the finest detail. We need to always keep in mind that He is interested and cares about every part of our lives.

So, if God knows what we need, why doesn't the provision just fall into our laps? Surely the One who loves us so much should automatically provide for us? And yet He says that we must ask so that we can receive!

Well, one of the reasons we need to ask is that He wants us to involve Him in every aspect of life. It's relationship that He desires. If we didn't go to Him with our requests, we would soon become self-dependent and not develop or grow to depend on Him.

But there is another reason. We need to go back to the beginning and see God's plan for Adam to understand from Scripture why God requires us to pray. Here we see a key that will help us to understand God's intention to work **with** and **through** us to oversee His creation here on earth. Let these truths impact your heart and mind as you read.

God's original plan

'Then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' (Genesis 1:26)

We know from Scripture that God existed before anything was made and that He is the only Creator. Genesis 1:31 tells us that everything He made in the heavens and earth was very **good**. He didn't create bad or sub-standard things. This truth is so important for us to grasp and receive deep into our hearts. The devil lies to people about the intention of God to do good and to give good things. God's will for the earth and for us all was and is good.

However, we see much evidence in the world around us that God's will and desire to bless man is not yet fully demonstrated here on earth as it is in heaven. Heaven is a place that is free from sin, sickness and any negative or evil power. It is full of the goodness of God. **Heaven is God's**

standard and will for the earth. Yet we can see the evidence of other powers and influences that are at work here on earth. God's will is not yet fully established. We are frequently being made aware of the pain and suffering, injustice and sin throughout the world.

Why? And where does it all come from? Well, Scripture is clear that this is the consequence of sin (the fall) and the work of the devil.

Mankind to rule the earth

'Then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' (Genesis 1:26)

After God had made everything He **gave** authority to Adam and Eve, the first people ever created. God decided to delegate the responsibility of managing the earth to mankind. Psalm 8:6 tells us that mankind was made ruler over the works of God's hands. Adam and Eve were to have dominion on earth in a way that would bless and nurture God's good creation. They were to keep God's order on earth by overseeing His work.

Authority lost

Even though Adam and Eve originally had the right and authority to rule the earth, Satan tempted them to sin. Once sin entered the human race man lost this God-given right to rule, giving Satan certain rights and power on earth. The entrance of sin gave the devil the opportunity he wanted - to rob, kill and destroy the good that God had made (John 10:10).

Due to sin, the devil has gained certain powers in this world, although let's keep in mind that his power is very limited in comparison to the power of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that Satan is called *'the god of this age'* and Jesus referred to him as *'the ruler of this world'* (John 12:31).

We know that God is Supreme ruler over all, including the devil. But we also see that God has chosen mankind to bring His dominion on earth. The revelation every believer needs to be clear about is that God has not changed His original plan to rule the earth through His people!

Authority restored - in Christ

God sent His Son Jesus to destroy the works of the devil and to redeem all through His blood sacrifice on the Cross. Every believer was given authority

to rule the earth again, but this time in the name and power of Jesus and not in human strength or power. This authority in Christ is even greater than the authority Adam was given.

'For if by the one man's offence, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.'
(Romans 5:17)

Every person who receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour has been made righteous before God (1 Corinthians 1:30) and is given authority over all the power of the enemy. Now we who belong to Him stand in His authority and are called to represent Jesus and bring His rule here on this earth.

'Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.' (Luke 10:19)

A believer has power to reign **now** in this life through Jesus -in His power and authority. God now brings His will to the earth through the prayers and authority of His people.

Jesus rules through our prayers

The Kingdom of God comes to the earth as we agree with God's will and ask for it to be done. Prayer really is the greatest power that is on this earth simply because it releases the power of God. God desires to bless and fill the earth with His presence and power, we believe and agree in prayer, and He does it. The amazing thing is that He has chosen to execute His will with and through us, not independently from us!

I know this is a well-used example, but it does describe the results of our prayers in a way we can grasp easily. My garden will become overgrown and messy if I don't manage it properly. If I want flowers in it then I will have to plant them. If I want the lawn to look good, then I have to cut the grass. If the weeds are left to grow with the other plants, there will be competition for the soil and my flowers will become weak! I might dream about having a beautiful garden, but unless I take action, it will never happen.

If we desire the Kingdom of God to come into our world, we need to cooperate with God and ask for His will to be done. Through prayer, we can 'plant' the right things into the earth. If the enemy is ruining our lives and the lives of other people, then we have authority to evict him. God wants us to pray so that He can rule the earth through us and bring His riches and blessing into a world that is desperate to receive from Him.

Note:

The Bible is very clear that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood (people), but against Satan and his kingdom. (Ephesians 6:12). We are to rule over the works of the devil and apply our authority through faith in God's Word and prayer. This will advance the Kingdom of God and defeat all the powers of darkness.

Here is one example of bringing the reign of God on earth: A few years ago a friend and I were talking one night to a girl about Jesus. It was getting late and my friend decided to go upstairs to bed. I continued to talk about Jesus and the girl began to describe the vision that God was giving her. She saw a pair of scales with one side weighed down by darkness and the other by light. She knew that her life was in the balance and knew that it was her decision that would determine the way the scales would fall. She was seeing into the spirit realm where there was a battle going on for her soul.

Upstairs, my friend wasn't sleeping, but on her knees praying. She was operating in the unseen realm and commanding the enemy to loose his hold over this girl's life. As my friend prayed for her salvation, the girl began to respond to Jesus. She gave her life to Christ that night and came out of the Kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of Light. We had both brought the rule of God to the earth through our words and prayers.

Please understand that we cannot override a person's will through prayer. God has given every person free will to choose life or death. However, we have power to stop the enemy from influencing people's lives and can release God's power. Then people are free to see Jesus and make their own decision to follow Him.

Our battle is not against people, but against satanic powers that want to keep people in bondage and darkness. Declaring victory and using our authority in this particular situation over the enemy ultimately brought about the reign of Jesus in this girl's life.

Reigning in life

We are like an army, having authority over the powers of darkness (not over people) implementing and enforcing the will of God through our prayers and through the declaration of His Word. In His name we evict the powers of darkness and bring in the rule of the Kingdom of God. Wherever God's people understand this and act on it, the Kingdom of darkness is overcome by the Kingdom of Light, and there is a very real victory brought to the earth through the prayers and actions of the Saints.

Your prayers count!

Many believers are waiting for God to do something and have the ungodly attitude – ‘que sera, sera - whatever will be, will be’. This is not the will of God. We are called to be active and not passive, to ask in faith and receive whatever we ask in agreement with His will.

Everything has already been done for us on the Cross. Our work is to believe, ask and receive! If we see unrighteousness and injustice in our nation, we are not to ignore it, complain, or feel helpless. In every situation, including the most difficult ones, Jesus is the answer and we have power to bring in His rule and Kingdom. We are made **kings**, serving the **King of Kings**, bringing change to our nations.

CHAPTER 2 : SOLID FOUNDATIONS FOR PRAYER

To have an effective prayer life, we need to understand the importance of the work of the Cross. If we pray knowing where we stand with God, we will begin from a firm foundation and build on truth.

A wise builder will make sure his foundations are firm and secure so that everything else that is added to that building will have the support and strength to stand. Likewise, we enter into the benefits of God's Kingdom when we build our prayer lives on the firm foundation of truth. Prayers based on anything other than God's Word will not produce the results that we need or that God wants to give. Knowing our position in relation to the enemy will also enable us to overcome his accusations and lies.

This chapter will bring fresh revelation of the work of the Cross and show how we can apply these transforming truths as we pray.

The power of the blood of Jesus

The blood of Jesus carries amazing power for everyday life and enables us to live in victory. Applying faith in the blood of Jesus will transform your prayers and give you confidence and boldness before God.

‘Jesus answered and said to them. “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”’ (John 6:29)

The Lord is always working faith into our hearts so that we believe in all that He has done. Faith is His way for us, and this Scripture shows us clearly that it is our job to believe. What a challenge for us all! Believe in Jesus and all He accomplished on the Cross and this will bring God's will here on earth. Prayers of faith based on the finished work of the Cross will be prayers that are answered.

Your acceptance is based on His performance

God's acceptance of us is not based on our own performance or ability to live a good life, neither is it based on our character and works. Our standing before God is solely and entirely based on Jesus' work on the Cross for us. This brings absolute freedom into our lives when we believe in the perfect performance of the Son of God and **not** our own.

‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’ (John 14:6)

The only way to God is through Jesus, His Son. He poured out His blood on the Cross for our sins and the sins of the whole world. Sin entered the human race through Adam and we were no longer able to fellowship with God, whose nature is holy. Mankind died spiritually through sin and was destined for eternal separation from God.

Jesus came to the earth and was the perfect sinless sacrifice required by God to pay for our sins. The gift of **life**, eternal life, is now given to all who believe in Jesus and confess Him as Lord. We are reconciled by Jesus to the Father and become children of God.

'But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God to those who believe in His name: Who were born not of blood, nor of human flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'
(John 1:12-13)

His blood makes us holy

God's qualification of acceptance is holiness. Not one of us has lived a holy life, and without Jesus we have no power to change. However, the good news is Jesus shed His blood on our behalf to make us holy. This is the message of mercy and grace, the work of God and not us!

'But this Man [Jesus], after He had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down at the right hand of God... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.'
(Hebrews 10:12 & 14)

Because of the sin-state of mankind, we could not simply be modified or slightly altered. We had to be made completely new through the sacrifice of the Son of God. This is the only way we can come before God as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.'
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

'I have been crucified with Christ. it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.'
(Galatians 2:20)

We now live by faith in Jesus and His finished work on the Cross. Our sin nature - the old person - has been crucified with Christ. We are now new creatures and made new by Him. We are not **trying** to be someone

new - we are. We don't **try** to be made holy by our efforts or works, we **are** made holy by His blood!

'... Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...'
(Ephesians 1:4)

Prayer, worship and intimacy with God would not be possible without the shed blood of Jesus and our faith in His work on the Cross. Jesus has made the way for us to come before Him and has clothed us in His righteousness. We are made holy to enjoy fellowship with our Holy God.

'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Faith makes all the difference

Many Christians find themselves unable to approach God with confidence because they think that they are unworthy and unwanted in God's presence. An older lady once approached me during a meeting to ask me a few questions about prayer. She said *'Judith, you seem to have this prayer thing working for you. I don't have the confidence or ability to pray like you do, I feel so inadequate. When I pray, I feel like God isn't there and my prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling and come back to me. I never feel accepted and I'm so aware of my failures as I pray. I know that I should pray, but it really isn't a time I enjoy. What can you do to help me?'*

This dear lady had gone through years of her Christian life and not had revelation about the power of the blood of Jesus. The only way I could help her was to tell her about the work of Jesus and show her that her job was to believe that He had accepted her, cleansed her with His blood, and promised to be with her always.

Never are we to base our relationship with God on our feelings as they can vary from one minute to the next. Our prayers may seem to hit the ceiling, but the truth is that God is listening and hearing all the faith-filled prayers of His children. It really does help if we ignore our feelings and thank God that He is there as promised and that He has made us worthy in His sight.

Only faith in the blood of Jesus makes us worthy

For us to enjoy being with God, we must know that we are welcome and not condemned by God. He doesn't constantly remind us of our sins and

failures but reminds us of His mercy and forgiveness. God wipes out our sin - it's the devil that reminds us of our failures.

Early on in my Christian life, I did not believe that I was made holy and would try to please God by what I did. Not surprisingly, this resulted in striving and feelings of failure. Then I had this life-changing revelation. Jesus did it all for me so that I can rest in His work. Peace and joy filled my heart. Instead of looking away from Him, feeling guilty and unworthy, I knew I was cleansed and clothed in His righteousness. He has removed the shame of my sin and I could enjoy His love and acceptance. This changed the way I saw myself and had a positive effect on all my relationships. I became secure in His love, confident that He actually enjoyed me being there with Him.

Faith says 'God has done it' and accepts like a child

Daily cleansing from sin

Of course, we daily need His mercy and forgiveness. Scripture tells us that His mercies are new every morning. We aim to please Him with our lives, but if we fail, we only need to ask Him to forgive our sin and He removes it.

'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1John 1:9)

Confessing every known sin and turning away from it brings a believer back into right relationship with God.

Praying from Heaven – seated in Christ

What I want to share with you now is a revelation that has the potential to radically reform your prayer life. When I caught this revelation of victory in my spirit, I recognised that my prayers would never be the same again.

What I'm talking about is the incredible spiritual position the Cross has placed us in. If we grasp the value of this position by faith, our prayer life, thought life, and attitude to the world around us will be completely different. We will see that we are in a position that can truly make a difference.

Jesus is in heaven

The Bible tells us that Jesus is no longer here in Person. He has risen from the dead and is ascended and seated at the Father's right hand in heaven.

The Holy Spirit, also called the Spirit of Christ, now lives in us to bring the presence of Jesus into our hearts and lives.

'...He [God] raised him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.' (Ephesians 1:20-21)

Jesus is above every name and power, both in the physical world and in the spiritual world, the seen and unseen realms. The Son of God is seated in heaven and has finished His work for the needs and salvation of the world. Picture Him in this position of rest. He no longer has to do anything but is waiting for everything to be put under His feet.

If He is there - where are you?

'For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'
(Colossians 3:3)

Where Christ is, you are there too! Now the Bible clearly states that we were raised with Christ and seated in heavenly places in Him.

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...' (Ephesians 2:4-6)

You are seated in Christ in heavenly places!

This truth is not just for the future, for when we leave this earthly body and go to be with the Lord. It is true right now as you sit and read this book. Your position in Christ is far above every power and principality of darkness. You are seated with Him now in the greatest position of victory and success.

Every believer has been raised in Christ and is therefore in heavenly places. Let me remind you again, our work is to believe!

So what does this mean for me in everyday life as a believer? How does this affect the way I think, act and pray? Well, if I'm in Christ and He is in such an exalted position in heaven, then I am not confined or restricted to this earth and its powers. This means that when I pray, I can see myself already there in Christ, in heavenly places, above all the problems and

pressures of this world. I start to pray *from* my position of victory - I don't have to work my way *to* victory.

So whatever we pray, let's remember that we're not trying to get to the throne of God. We are already there in heavenly places in Him, with heaven's provision available to us.

Of course, we live out our lives here in our body, soul and spirit. We are human beings, and in our physical bodies we are earthbound. But we are not like other people because our spirit is alive to God when we are with Him. We are called to live raised in Christ with a very different perspective of life. This does not mean that we deny our needs and problems but starting with the revelation of our position in heaven will create faith in our hearts for whatever miracle or provision we need.

See yourself with Christ in heaven right now, exalted and victorious in life

Begin praying from heaven

Earlier I used the example 'the prayers were bouncing off the ceiling'. I'm sure we could all say that at times we don't experience or feel the nearness of God when we pray. But if we will believe our position in Christ, we will **know** where we are. No feeling or natural restriction will be able to hinder our prayer and communication with God.

Prayer begins with Jesus in heaven. Whenever a believer starts to pray with this truth in their heart and mind, they begin with victory. Their prayer and fellowship with God is not restricted by earthly things, and they are **free** to be with God in heavenly places!

Many people begin to pray by focusing on the problem or need. **We must pray the answer and not the problem!** If we will ascend by faith to God's throne and see the provision there for every need, we will start to pray the answer. Please understand that this is God's Word and not a theory! He has given us this position in Christ so that we can glorify Him by living our lives in victory. A temptation we all face is to stay earthbound with our focus on the problems. This has the effect of restricting our faith and reducing the effectiveness of our prayers. We must retrain ourselves to pray the answer. Let me give you an example of praying the answer:

'Lord, You are great, and nothing is impossible for You. I come to You, in faith that You will change my circumstances, Thank You for Your heart and will to bless me. I believe in Your power to provide for my every need and so I thank You that You are doing great things on my behalf.'

Consider the flea!

I once heard that this amazing little insect can jump incredibly high for its size - up to three feet! However, if you place a cover over one flea and restrict its jumping to three inches, then after a while remove the restriction it will jump only as far as it has been trained or allowed - 3 inches! Yet if you train it to jump to its full potential, then it will.

This same behavioural pattern is evident with humans too! If we are restricted to perform at lower levels in prayer or in any area of life, then only that level will be reproduced through us. If we take off the restrictions and limitations of experience, opinion, and anything else that limits us, then we will produce far more. For a believer, it's all a question of believing our position in Christ and behaving accordingly!

If we will rise up into the place we have in Jesus so that we can pray the way God wants us to pray, everything will change. As Jesus is far above **all**, so we are above **all** in Him. Everything Jesus has is ours which includes all victory over sin, death and hell.

'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth, for you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

Setting our minds on things above brings us into line with God's will. In Christ we are in victory, joy, love, health, and life! A believer doesn't try to be victorious - he is! The mistake many Christians make is that they're trying to get victory instead of accepting that Jesus has already given His victory to us. We begin with victory and continue in victory! We are above every circumstance and situation in Him.

Life can be full of trials and circumstances that wear us out and rob our faith. As soon as we are consumed more with the problems than the answers, it's time to set our mind on Jesus and the victory. This is a crucial truth that has power to bring hope and faith into our hearts again. As soon as we return to faith in God, then we are on the path of victory!

Above all in Christ

You may have heard of some people who go to the top of high buildings and mountains to pray because they feel they have an advantage over the powers of darkness by doing so. This, of course, is fine if the Lord asks you to do it - obedience will always bring victory. However this 'natural' position does not change your position in Christ, you can't get a higher or greater

one than that! It may help your mind gain perspective, but there is no greater position than where you are in Christ - far above every name and power. Our faith is to rest in all that He has done for us on the Cross. He has given us everything - His life, His victory and power.

We need this to be **revelation** for our lives. If we live with this truth in our hearts and minds, we will rest in God's work and not struggle to attain what is already there for us. The Lord longs for us to believe Him and enter into the fullness of His riches and blessings. Trying to get the victory is not scriptural and will wear us out. Believing that in Christ we have the victory will bring peace into our hearts even during the fiercest battle and trial and give us faith to win. In truth, we have everything that He has!

Watch what you think!

The key to living in this truth is to take hold of our minds and think in line with God's Word

This can be a difficult thing to do, but you are able to do this if you belong to Jesus. Jesus has set us free to think right. As we **set** our minds on things above by thinking about God's Word and His promises, we take captive every thought which contradicts truth and make it obedient to Christ. Faith will begin to rise in our heart and we will pray with heavens perspective.

A number of years ago, I lived and ministered for nearly a year in Washington, DC. I was in a new country with people I didn't know, and it was a great opportunity to develop my relationship with God! I spent hours in my bedroom praying, mainly because I had no one else to talk to!

God began to radically change my perspective during those times. As I prayed, God began to show me the real needs of the city in visions. I saw individual people who were desperate for help - addicts, murderers and broken lives. I prayed for the ones He showed me and was touched with His heart for them. As He opened my eyes to their needs, a question that was deep in my heart came to the surface. What could one person like me do to change what was happening to the people of this city? How could my prayer affect change in their lives? I can honestly say that I was not confident in prayer, nor did I consider myself an expert. I really felt overwhelmed by what God was showing me.

Then God flooded my heart with the answer. I could change **everything!** Because He has placed me in Christ and therefore above every need and power of darkness, I could believe God to change every situation I was

seeing through **my** prayers. I was above all in Him so that I could pray His victory and life for them. Acting in His name had little to do with me, but everything to do with Him. With my mind on heaven's perspective, I was able to pray with faith and joy that God was bringing His will to the earth through me.

How to approach God's throne

The way we are to approach God in prayer is set up clearly for us in Scripture. There are many theories in the church today about prayer and coming into His presence that are not based on God's Word. If we are to be successful in prayer, we need to maintain a healthy respect for God and pray the way He has chosen for us to pray. God desires a loving and intimate relationship with every one of His children, but we must always keep in mind **who** it is we're talking to! Acknowledging that we pray not only to a loving and merciful Heavenly Father, but also to the One who is Lord and King, will produce a balanced and healthy attitude towards Him.

Right attitudes that bring blessing

A new respect and reverence for God is being restored to the Church. There is a growing understanding among God's people of His true character and nature. He is Holy **and** Father! This 'balanced' view changes the way we see God and therefore the way we relate to Him. We see many results in today's world of the breakdown of right attitudes to earthly authority. This promotes lack of respect for others and ultimately lawlessness. It's the same when we have a lack of respect for God. If believers have an unbalanced view of God it can produce wrong perspectives and sometimes wrong actions. As Christians, we are to know the blessings of being under God's authority and care. This is the safest place to be and brings true freedom and joy into our lives.

My own life with God has been greatly enriched through knowing Him not only as loving Father who wants to share His life and heart with me, but also as Awesome God, before whom I willingly bow my whole being. Instead of making Him like another person in my thinking, or even my equal, I recognise His greatness and this breeds the honour and respect for Him that He deserves. This in turn expands my faith in His power to change everything.

The Holy of Holies

In the light of all that Jesus has done, we can look at the Old Testament scriptures to help us understand more about God's presence. Certain procedures were given by the Lord and were necessary to follow before man could approach Him.

After leaving Egypt, God chose to dwell among His people in a tabernacle or tent (see Exodus 26:1). Moses was given detailed instructions on how to make the Tabernacle, but for our purposes in understanding how to approach God, we will look at the general plan. There were three distinct sections or areas. They were called the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, also called the Holy of Holies. The Outer Court and Holy Place fulfilled certain functions, and priests ministered there both day and night. However, only one man, the high priest, could enter the Holy of Holies and this was just once a year. He came right through the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place where God dwelt. Here he would make atonement for the sins of the people using the blood of animals.

This Most Holy Place was honoured and revered by God's people, but it was also feared. The high priest would have a rope tied to his ankle so he could be dragged out if overcome by God's presence.

Today our great High Priest Jesus has entered the Holy of Holies and with his blood sacrifice He has removed the veil that separated us from God. At the moment of Jesus' death, the temple curtain was torn in two - symbolic of the way He opened for us to come right into the Most Holy Place. In Christ there is no longer anything that separates us from God, nor is there any restriction on the amount of time we can spend there with Him. Jesus has made this place open and available to every believer.

It is important to know that we are not to be afraid of entering His presence. He has shown us mercy and love. No longer do we need to stay in the Outer Court, slightly removed from God. We can enter the Most Holy Place by faith in Jesus and enjoy the most fulfilling relationship of our lives

Come boldly

The **way** God wants us to approach Him is amazing when we recognise Who it is we are meeting! Scripture tells us that God wants us to be **bold** when we approach Him. When we look back through the history of Israel and see how they related to God, we can only praise Him for the incredible grace we have been given in Jesus. Freedom to approach God and boldness before Him is a miracle of grace. If someone is bold, they are courageous and confident in their attitude and actions. They don't hesitate

or look like they're faltering. Understand that God does not want us to be timid and shy, but bold, because we have been made worthy by His blood. True humility receives God's report and acts on it.

'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4:16)

We don't find judgement waiting for us, only mercy and grace to help us. We have God-given right to be with Him. We are not to behave as though we don't belong in His presence - He wants us to behave as His sons. We are welcome, accepted and loved by God and have been given a glorious inheritance in Christ. Remember, in Christ there is neither male nor female - all are sons and have the same right of inheritance – Galatians 3:28.)

'Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.' (Galatians 4:7)

Receive all that is yours

Don't be apologetic about your inheritance and the position you have been given by God. Go in before His throne and receive it! Our Heavenly Father loves us perfectly, has no favourites and has given us a rich inheritance in Christ. It is so important for believers to find out what belongs to them so that by faith (the way everything comes to us from God) we can receive all He has given. If I inherit a large sum of money from a relative, it would be of no use to me if I didn't know about it. Once I know the good news, then it's up to me to find out how to draw it out! It's the same with prayer. The blessings and provision that are ours need to be known and then drawn upon.

Knowing what belongs to us in Christ and drawing it out by faith pleases God. This boldness shows Him that you believe in the work of His Son. Your faith is in Him, not you!

Let's look at another scripture that helps us to know how to approach God's throne:

'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'
(Hebrews 10:19-22)

There are four 'keys' given in this scripture which, if applied, will help us to enter right into the presence of God:

1. We need to make the decision to come before God

We must decide to come before His throne. This is a very important point, although it seems obvious. It's amazing how apathy can keep us from making the decision to draw near to our Father. Positionally we are in Christ, but there needs to be a heart and mind choice to meet with Him. We draw near by faith to enter the throne room of heaven. As we actively draw near to Him, He promises to draw near to us. (James 4:8). Once again, it's important to ignore any feelings that deny the truth.

2. We are to be bold because of the blood

As I've mentioned before, being good and having a great prayer life does not qualify us - only the blood of Jesus gives us entry to the throne. Our performance, or lack of it, does not enable or disqualify us from meeting with God. Repentance and faith in Jesus is the way. We all start and finish with what Jesus has done. Recognising that in ourselves we have no right to be there requires sincere humility. The throne room of heaven is where we are to be free from fear and free from the pressure to perform. In this place we are comfortable and 'at home'. Here we can receive and enjoy God's presence.'

3. We are to come with a 'true' heart

A heart that is true is one that is honest with God. At times we can say things to God we don't mean, our lips speaking things we think God wants to hear but our heart is far away. We can go through the performance or ritual of prayer, but in fact not meet with God at all. The Lord always knows what is really going on in our hearts. Be honest. Getting real with God makes all the difference in prayer! Psalm 62:8 tells us to pour out our hearts to Him - this is where true prayer really begins. He wants us to be real with Him and to be speaking from our hearts. However, be careful not to focus on yourself, but make Jesus the centre of your prayers.

Note:

Often as we begin to pray our words can seem distant and empty - as though we don't mean what we're saying. Our hearts appear to be cold and disinterested, even though we really do intend to draw near to God. This is where we can feel condemned if we're not careful. If this happens, don't fall into the devil's trap and think that you are being a

hypocrite. Keep going and tell the Lord you genuinely want to meet with Him and receive from Him even though you have no strong feelings as you pray. Perseverance will reap rewards as you determine to be real with the Lord and share your heart with Him. You will find that after a while, you will come through to a new place of genuine, heart-felt prayer if you keep on going. Don't give up but encourage yourself to enter right into His presence.

4. We are to have full assurance of faith

Faith is being sure and certain of the things we don't see or necessarily feel (Hebrews 11:1). We please God when we believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6). **Faith has rewards!** As we believe that we are before the throne, God is pleased and He will reward us. Unbelief keeps us out of God's presence and promises. Faith releases God's presence and promises into our lives. We will receive full assurance and confidence as we begin to walk by faith and not by sight.

CHAPTER 3 : KNOWING THE LORD

Having established the foundational truths that put us in the right position for prayer, we can now move on to talk about relationship. I once read somewhere a simple comment that helps me to remain focused on God's priorities for my life:

'Keep the main thing the main thing'

The main thing isn't productivity or what we 'achieve' in prayer - it's relationship. The first and greatest commandment the Lord gave was that we should love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This helps us to see that we are not prayer 'machines' that just do a job to produce results, but we are people who are primarily called to love.

Your relationship with Him

Jesus is **the** most dependable Friend we can ever have. He never fails to love us and believe the best for us, even when we doubt ourselves. Knowing Him brings a deep stability, strength and satisfaction into our lives. Everything else may change, but He remains the same. If we develop a strong and vital relationship with Him, we will see His blessing and provision released into our lives.

Note:

I would just like to add that some people get confused about who to pray to - the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. He is One God and so there really is freedom to use whichever name is on your heart. Jesus said to pray to the Father in His name, receiving help from the Holy Spirit as your Comforter and Helper. Don't let this be a point of confusion or distraction as He is One. If you prefer to talk to Jesus or the Father, be free. I sometimes will address all three in my prayers.

People who **know God** will do great things. As a result, we will find ourselves doing things that surpass our natural abilities.

Heart or head communication

How we communicate with God is important. Long prayers of fine sounding words will not necessarily bring fellowship with God. For those of us who don't feel that our words in prayer are eloquent and flow easily, this is good news. The prayer that comes from the heart and not just the head is the kind of prayer God responds to.

Two different ways to be with Jesus

There is a chapter in Luke's gospel that highlights some radical differences between heart and head communication with Jesus. Let's take a look at Luke 7:36-50:

The story begins with Simon, who was a Pharisee and probably quite important in Jewish society. Having heard about Jesus, he was interested to find out more, so he invited Him around for a meal.

During this meal, a woman who was a renowned sinner burst in uninvited and almost threw herself at Jesus. Imagine the impact she made on the party. The kind of people who were there would never associate with her under normal circumstances. She was carrying a jar of expensive fragrant oil and proceeded to pay special attention to Jesus. She kissed His feet and cried so much that she had to wipe the tears away with her hair. She broke open the jar and poured out the oil onto His feet.

Imagine yourself there, witnessing this display of extravagant emotion and love. Rather embarrassing for the onlookers! I don't suppose they really knew how to react or what to do.

Now let's keep in mind that God the Holy One is in this house. Here are two people relating to Him in very different ways. Simon wants to genuinely find out **about** Jesus. He is watching and assessing the way Jesus responds to the woman. The woman, on the other hand, doesn't see anybody else but Jesus. She's not interested in Simon's reaction and probably doesn't even notice him. People had rejected her most of her life, but she saw something in this Person that compelled her. She was drawn to Him, this Rabbi and Miracle Worker. His love was so powerful and real to her that she was prepared to break every social and religious barrier to reach Him. Even her own fears and shame couldn't stop her. She knew somehow that He would receive her and accept her. She demonstrated genuine, heartfelt repentance, and as she humbled herself before Him, she was overcome by His unspoken acceptance. In all this, she was acknowledging her need for Him.

Simon, standing at a distance watching the scene, continued to assess Jesus. His relationship was mind-centred and based on observation and interest. The woman, on the other hand, was most definitely responding to Jesus with her heart. Now we know the Scripture speaks to us about the saving power of God's love and His willingness to accept sinners. However, we can learn a lot about prayer from this passage. There is a stark contrast between these two relationships.

Simon sat and talked with Jesus but didn't give himself to Jesus. He had no comprehension of the mercy he needed or the value of the intimate relationship he had missed with Him.

The woman's desperation brought God's power into her life. She left forgiven, healed, restored, and **full** of Jesus. Simon was left probably a little challenged, but ultimately not changed!

***We must meet Jesus with our whole being and
not just our minds***

Prayer must progress from the mind to the heart if we are to really encounter God and receive from Him. I believe there can be traces of 'Simon' in all of us at times. We invite Jesus into our lives to be our Lord and genuinely want to know Him, but our minds can dominate and be a stumbling block. This restricts our faith and keeps us away from the joy of heart to heart communication with our Lord.

Jesus shows us here from His Word that the issue we must face is recognising our need for Him. A holy desperation for Jesus will bring revival in our relationship with Him. He will impact us with His life as we humbly approach Him with desire for Him alone.

Loving Jesus

Our prayer times need to be full of loving Jesus. Loving Him with all that we are and have will bring great blessing. Notice the scripture says that since the time Jesus came in, this woman had not stopped kissing Him. Another definition for worship is to 'kiss'! Since the time Jesus came into our hearts, have we stopped worshipping Him and loving Him? People may be embarrassed at this open display of love, but God isn't. Our first ministry or call as believers is to love the Lord and worship Him. Out of this abandonment to Him, we are able to meet with Him, touch His heart, and receive all He wants to give.

Head or mind prayers will never get you into this place of intimacy with God. Coming to Him in sincerity of heart, longing to give and receive will bring Jesus into every area of life. Yes, we are saved. But we must go on to know Jesus, meeting daily with Him in His mercy, love and grace. This brings a fresh revelation to us of Jesus and the joy of our salvation. God always sees and looks at our hearts. We must push through every barrier to get to Jesus and worship Him. He has broken down every wall of separation for us to be with Him.

When we come to Jesus and see how much we have been forgiven, thanksgiving will certainly pour from our hearts. A new fire of love for Him begins.

How inexpressible is the gift He has given to us in Christ. Just talking from our mind, without engaging our heart, robs us of the sweet communion that is available for every believer. When we have this daily heart fellowship with our Lord, His glory will fill and be seen in our lives.

The importance of worship in prayer

We see from reading the gospels that people would often worship Jesus before they asked Him for help. This was the first and most 'natural' response that brought the right heart of submission and honour for the Lord.

'And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and he fell down at Jesus feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about 12 years of age, and she was dying.' (Luke 8:41-42)

This man was desperate for a miracle. He didn't just ask Jesus to come and see his daughter, he actually fell at His feet, acknowledging that the One he came to was worthy of honour, respect and worship. From this humble position, he asks the Master for help. Prayer flows sweetly from a heart of submission and worship. No matter how desperate we are, Jesus is always worthy of our worship and praise. Worship prepares our hearts to pray and receive miracles from God.

Prayer and worship are inseparable as both bring us into relationship with God. I like to say they are 'married'! As with prayer, worship also takes place before God's throne. The importance of worship is shown in Jesus' teaching on prayer. He actually teaches us to begin prayer with worship.

'So He said to them, when you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name' (Luke 11:2)

To hallow God means to give Him honour. When we 'hallow' His name we praise and worship Him for His holiness, power, majesty and glory. He is Awesome, Father, Wonderful, Mighty, etc. Names are very important in scripture as they describe character. There are many names for God in the Bible that reveal His character and ways to us. We are to use them in our worship to expand our revelation of who He is and give Him the honour He is due.

If we find that our heart is cold or hard, true worship will restore the softness and the fire. As oil enables an engine to work, so the Holy Spirit anoints us to worship and we can flow with such ease from worship into prayer. We don't have to stop and think about what to pray when we have begun with worship - we are led easily into the prayers of the Spirit.

There really is a great difference in the way I pray if I have spent time in worship first. When I am on my own with God, I know that if I truly worship Him first, then I will pray very differently. Why? Well, my focus changes from self or circumstances to Jesus. My heart becomes softer and more loving with God's compassion filling my prayers. To worship Him in the beauty of His Holiness will fill us with awe. Selfish desires will fade away, and His will and desire will fill our heart.

Take time

There is always a temptation to rush our time with the Lord and pray about everything and everyone on our minds. We forget just to love and minister to Him. One of the reasons for dull and lifeless praying is a lack of time spent in worship. If we take time to worship Him first, our prayers will be fresh and full of life. (For more details on spending time with God, see the next section, 'Alone with God in the Secret Place.')

Ministering to the Lord is a priority for believers and enables Spirit-filled and Spirit-led prayer. As we worship, we see Him with the eyes of faith high and lifted up, seated on the throne. He is surrounded by the hosts of heaven who are constantly giving him glory, honour and praise. As you are reading this, all heaven is worshipping the risen glorified Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. There is praise and adoration, loud voices declaring His glory with elders and angels falling down before Him. Heaven never rests in its worship of God.

‘Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. To receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!”’ (Revelation 5:11-12)

Our worship joins in with the constant worship of heaven

We are to join in with this constant worship and give to Jesus the glory, honour, thanksgiving and praise. There is a principle for worship that is set in heaven - to **give**. To worship God takes time and a certain amount of effort. Our self-life (or flesh) does not like the sacrifice that worship requires. Worship is for God, **not** ourselves, although we reap far more from His presence than we give.

We are unable to enter into true worship by being self-centred. Our worship must centre on God and not on ourselves. There are times for singing about who we are in Christ, and proclaiming all that He has done for us. But worship is all **about Him** and is just **for Him**.

Note:

One way that will help you worship God is to take a Psalm and speak it aloud or even sing it to your own tune. Try this with Psalm 96. Personalise the words – e.g. I will sing a new song. I proclaim the good news of grace, of your love and kindness, etc. Develop this by choosing your own psalms or scriptures or even write your own psalm.

Alone with God in the secret place

‘But you, when you pray go into your room and when you have shut your door pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.’ (Matthew 6:6)

There is no alternative and no other way – we must all have time on our own with God. The devil will try to make our lives so busy and our flesh will prefer other activities or company, but it is essential for us to have time alone with God. **Without personal time with Him, we are weak, our love for Him fails and we become worldly!** The influence of other things will crowd out the holy influence of God if we allow them to.

The more we have to do in life, the more we need God's wisdom and power to help us. Prayer and communion with God will prepare us for the things God has for us to do every day and will alert us to the distractions of the flesh and the devil. Now, this holds different challenges for each one of us. The circumstances of our lives will vary so much - one may have small children, another may run a business or work long hours, and yet another may have hours to spare each day. But for all of us, the words of Jesus are the same. It's not 'if', but 'when' you pray.

No one else can develop your personal time with God. Each one of us chooses to make time for God. Excuses can always be made, and I have made some wonderful ones in my time, but we need to just do it!

Finding time to pray

Many believers are stretched and pushed to their limits with work, family and church commitments. Time with God can quickly become last on the list of priorities, not first! Having no or very little effective time with God is a deceptive trap we can easily fall into - 'I just haven't had time to pray today.' Even if our lives are busy, our priority every day should be to spend time with God. When time with God is a priority, God's order comes into our life. If we sow time with God, we will reap rewards. Our life will be ordered by Him, and filled with peace, wisdom and purpose.

The truth about prayer is our flesh is weak – but our spirit is **willing**. If we learn not to give in to our own fleshly desires, we will discover a willingness to pray that comes from within. The key is to take the first step and go into the room to be alone with Him.

Training for life

A life of prayer doesn't just fall on us, it is something we develop by spending time with God. Just as a marriage or any relationship needs time and commitment to develop and grow, so does our relationship with God. The Christian life is a process of growth to maturity in Christ. It is up to us to train and discipline ourselves to be alone with Him to pray.

Growing up

This may not be your experience at all, but when I was first born again, it was so easy for me to spend time with God. I was overwhelmed by God's loving acceptance and I really did seem to experience a 'honeymoon' period. After a while, I found that my **feelings** changed and prayer began to

become a walk of pure faith. I actually wondered if I had backslidden, but after a while I realised that God was developing my faith. This was a hard lesson to learn, to simply believe. I knew that God had not changed, even if I didn't feel anything. He was the same loving Father I had experienced before.

During the next season, the Lord began to show me areas in my life that did not please him - sin that I was living with that I hadn't seen or acknowledged before. I learned to confess my sin to Him, repent and believe in His forgiveness. (Of course, this is an ongoing process.)

After some time of 'introspection', the Lord revealed to me that the purpose of the secret place was to meet with Him and to pray, not just to get my life right with Him. Spending all my time in repentance was not what He required and was robbing our fellowship together. I needed to progress into intimacy with Him and then into prayer for others. Here He would minister to me and show me who to pray for and what to pray. My prayers became led by Him.

Each one of us should be able to look back and see the changes and developments in our relationship with God. We must always be moving forward with Him, willing and open to change. Then our relationship will grow in depth and love as we pursue knowledge and intimacy with Him.

You can be joyful in prayer!

'Even them I will bring to My Holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.' (Isaiah 56:7)

Do you believe what you have just read, that God will make you **joyful** in prayer? The Bible says that in His presence is fullness of joy. So, of course there should be joy in prayer. Even if we see people in great need there is always joy in God's presence for us to receive as we carry their needs to the Father. Nothing is too difficult for God and He will answer us. Believing God releases His joy.

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the 'house' or dwelling place of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). No longer does God reside in a tent or temple building as He did in Old Testament times. Now He lives in believers. God calls us His house of prayer and we are called to pray for all nations. There is no limit, restriction or distance in the Spirit. Our prayers can go anywhere all over the world. If I pray for China tonight, then they will receive the

blessing of God. Our prayers can touch any person in the world at any time.

We need to understand that every believer has a ministry of prayer and not just those with a recognised 'gift' for intercession. We all have a God-given responsibility to pray for our families, friends, neighbours, nation, etc - being a house of prayer means that God's power through you is reaching those far and near.

Years ago I read a testimony about Jackie Pullinger, an English missionary working in the Walled City, Hong Kong. She once told of spending three days alone in her room praying. The Lord led her in prayer for all those who never had anyone pray for them. She wept as the heart of God touched her heart with the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of the people. I'm convinced that each one of us can trace our salvation back to someone who prayed for us. In reality, you may be the only person who has ever prayed for your neighbour or the person who sits next to you on the train. Quite a sobering thought!

God gives and increases our desire for prayer

It really is true to say that the more you pray, the more you will want to pray. If I am going through a particularly difficult time and I'm finding it hard to pray, I will ask Him to help and give me renewed desire. I don't wait for a feeling, but I act on it and believe He has answered me. There will be a fresh release of grace to pray.

'For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.'
(Galatians 6:8)

We reap what we sow. Giving time to fleshly things will produce fleshly living. Giving time to the things of God will produce godly living. For example, watching too much television will increase the desire for more. We can quickly get into the wrong habits that feed our selfish desires. Reading the Word and prayer will increase the desire for God and His Kingdom. You will reap either flesh or Spirit depending on where you are sowing. A farmer knows he will not have a harvest if he doesn't first spend time sowing the seed. You get a harvest in prayer from where you have sown, and you will in due season reap the results (Galatians 6:9).

The secret place transforms you, moulds you, and prepares you to walk with God through the day!

Tips for spending time with God

- If you are not used to spending time with God, don't begin by setting impossible targets. Start with 10-15 minutes a day and build from there.
- Vary what you do and don't get stuck on methods or ways to meet with God. Be with God with your heart. Sing, pray in tongues, worship, praise, give thanks, read the Word, listen, sit, lie. (Don't get too comfortable or you may fall asleep!) What works for one person won't always work for another. Also, what works on one occasion might not be appropriate for another.
- Finally, if you have an extremely busy life, ask God to help you change or rearrange something so that you can pray. Be aware that Satan will try to put other things in your way to prevent you from praying. Resist him and determine to be in the secret place every day. You will reap enormous benefits, and His Kingdom will too!

CHAPTER 4 - PRACTICAL HELP FOR PRAYER

Enemies of your prayer life

Satan attacks a believer's prayer life because prayer releases the victory of Jesus and will produce fruit. Any person who produces fruit for God will be opposed. So, it is wise to be aware of the devil's tactics and identify what is happening. Once we know the devil's schemes we can be equipped to win.

There are also some things we do or don't do that can prevent us from receiving the prayer answers to our prayers. This section aims to identify some of these areas and give solutions from God's word.

Unforgiveness

'And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.' (Mark 11:25-26)

Receiving forgiveness from God is conditional. Jesus says that if we do not forgive others who have hurt or offended us, we will not receive forgiveness from Him. That is a powerful statement of truth. Unforgiveness towards others will stop the power and blessings of God from being released into our lives (see Matthew 18:21-35).

Just as we have received God's mercy so we can be merciful to others and forgive all who sin against us or hurt us in any way. Bitterness and unforgiveness will 'bind' us and make us hard-hearted and unable to receive from God. Not only will it affect our prayers, but it can also have a negative effect on our mind and body.

It is very important to realise that forgiveness is a decision and not a feeling. We choose to forgive others. Once we have forgiven, we may not necessarily feel any different towards them, but God will enable us to love even our enemies. As we choose to forgive and begin to pray blessing on the ones who have hurt or offended us, God's love and mercy are released through our hearts. Then we are free and receive answers to our own prayers.

Sin

Scripture tells us that those who are in Christ have become the righteousness of God. This is the gift of God and can never be earned (2 Corinthians 5:21). However, sin hinders a believer's relationship with God and as a result, his prayer life.

'Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.' (1 John 3:21-22)

Confidence before God *and* answered prayer is assured for those who do the things that please God. We cannot continue to live in sin and have our prayers answered.

Many believers confess the same sin over and over again but fail to take hold of the power to live free from that sin. The good news is that not only can we be cleansed from our sin, we can also receive power from the Holy Spirit to enable us to live a holy life (1 John 1:7).

Discouragement

Discouragement is detrimental and can be devastating in the life of a believer. It robs joy, faith and vision resulting in apathy and failure. Thoughts like 'I don't know why I bother to pray' or 'God isn't listening anyway' fill the minds of discouraged individuals. We need to know that it is Satan that uses people to mock, accuse, hurt and undermine believers. King David experienced great opposition in his life and had every reason to be discouraged by the things people did and said about him.

'... They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer.' (Psalm 109:2-4)

David knew that his only reliable source of help and strength came from God and so he gave himself to prayer. We can learn a great deal from his life, particularly the way he dealt with hatred and opposition. He prayed out his problems before God and always came through to trusting God with everything. He was honest with the Lord but didn't remain in despair or self-pity.

The devil wins if we give into self-pity, self-justification or complaining. No matter what, we must run to Jesus with our problems. There we will find grace and strength to stand in His righteousness alone.

Our faith comes from hearing God's word. He is our shield and protection. Feed on the truth and confess it over your life. Believing and speaking the truth will extinguish the lies and accusations of the devil. As David learned to encourage himself in the Lord, we must do the same (1 Samuel 30:6). God is your best encourager and will lift you out of discouragement and restore your heart.

1. Dealing with accusation

Remember that the devil's aim is to keep us thinking negatively about ourselves. His main strategy is to accuse and remind us of our failure and sin, or to tell us that we will never be good enough. Living with a failure mentality disagrees with God's assessment of us as believers. He sees us as a success in Christ! Once we have repented of sin, we need to believe God's report about us and resist the devil and his lies. Believers can triumph over the accusations of the enemy by believing that God has forgiven and restored them.

'Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.' (James 4:7)

'And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.' (Revelation 12:1)

Speaking with faith about the power of the blood of Jesus will enable you to overcome every accusation and lie. Jesus has already defeated the enemy for you. Speak the Word aloud to yourself and declare it to the enemy! Don't be silent about all that Jesus has done for you. Your mind and attitudes will be changed as you meditate on truth and speak the Word (Romans 12:2). Positive, Word-based thinking will protect your heart and life and you will think and act the way God wants you to.

2. Dealing with anxiety

Worry is an enemy of prayer because it brings fear and robs our faith. One anxious thought can lead to a pattern of thinking that ensnares our lives in fear and unbelief.

'Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life."' (Luke 12:22)

God has made provision for us to live a worry-free life. Isn't that radical! Jesus told us not to worry because He knew we would be

tempted to do so. Life has so many challenges and we often face situations that could easily produce anxiety. As soon as we start to worry or be concerned about something, we have actually begun to try and work things out ourselves and are not trusting God. Worry and fear have the potential to paralyse our faith and will succeed unless we release everything to go through prayer.

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:6-7)

This scripture is our key to freedom. In every difficult situation we are to bring our requests to God. We are not designed to carry the load and must give it in faith to Jesus. Childlike trust in our heavenly Father will bring supernatural peace into our hearts and minds.

Now replace the worry with the promise: Just as our natural bodies are designed to fight disease, so the Word of God will destroy thoughts of worry and fear, bringing faith and peace. Once we have given our worries away to the Lord we must also receive God's promise of provision and victory from His Word. The Bible is full of promises and He will give us the specific one we need. Go to the Word and find a promise from your heavenly Father, who loves you and will guard, protect and provide for your life.

Thanksgiving is a vital ingredient in this prayer. It gets our thinking in line with Jesus and the answer. A thankful heart will be full of faith and joy that God is good and is working His will and victory. We don't just pray to be free from worry, we pray to get an answer that will change the situation. The peace of God will then guard and protect our mind and heart from every attack of the enemy. We can rest in faith as we meditate on God's goodness, power and will to bring miraculous change.

3. *Dealing with doubt and unbelief*

These are powerful enemies of prayer because they cause us to contradict the Lord and not believe His Word. The world around us is full of thinking and opinions that oppose faith. If we accept them ourselves we will become weak, unstable Christians. It is so important that each of us regularly spends time reading, hearing and receiving God's Word. This will remove uncertainty in our minds concerning God's will and root out wrong thinking and ideas.

Wrong thinking about God's will produces wrong praying. The Bible is very clear about the influence of doubt in our lives, especially concerning prayer. Doubt actually prevents us from receiving answers.

'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.' (James 1:5-8)

This speaks about wisdom but is true for everything we need to receive from God. Ask anything in faith, not doubting His Word or promises and it will be given. Doubt His Word or promises and we are unable to receive. Just as the wind tosses the waves of the sea in every direction, so doubt makes us unstable and uncertain about what God wants to give. Stability comes into our lives when we consistently believe the Word above everything. The Word says that this is how to receive what we ask for - in faith with no doubting!

As a child I played a game with a daisy, pulling off the petals one-by-one, declaring with each petal 'loves me, loves me not' until the last petal revealed the answer. A silly game I know, but isn't this how we are sometimes with God and prayer? He will, He won't, He will, He won't etc. If God's Word says it, then we must choose to believe and not doubt. No matter if situations don't appear to change, the Word of God is true and He will be faithful to His Word.

Receiving from God happens as we live by faith in His Word. Doubt can be 'put to flight' by applying the Word. Use the Word for every circumstance, meditate and feed on it so that your heart and mind will be filled with faith. Be single minded and certain about the blessings God wants to give you through prayer, and don't waver concerning the promises.

We must be careful not to entertain or live with unbelief and doubt in our lives. Many Christians don't realise that unbelief is a sin. Scripture shows us that our heart is evil if it is unbelieving and does not please God (Hebrews 3:12). Repent and turn away from doubt and unbelief. Make a decision to live by faith.

Actions that assist prayer

We have just looked at some of the hindrances to prayer. But we also need to see how our prayer lives can be influenced and enhanced for good. Just as a plant can grow faster in certain conditions, so we can assist the process of growth and fruitfulness in prayer by the things we do and the environment we live in.

1. Body language

We see from Scripture that Jesus used His physical body during prayer. He leapt for joy, cried, and even shouted. The Bible is full of commands to shout, dance, sing, clap etc. God wants us to use our bodies as we pray. (There are times for quiet prayer where we wait on the Lord and commune with Him, but even in these times our bodies can help to express what is happening.) It's the prayer of the heart that counts but body language is important. Here are some different positions and expressions that can help us in the different types of prayer: sitting, standing, walking, kneeling, prostration, quiet prayer, loud prayer.

2. Right Speaking

Once we have prayed and believe God to release His will into situations we must watch what we say. We need to agree with all we have asked and received in prayer. Talking to others can tempt us to negate our prayers and disagree with God's Word by being negative. Many people receive from God whilst they are praying but as soon as they see their friends their conversation changes and doesn't match what they left the prayer room believing. Doubt enters and hinders the answer.

Guard your tongue and speak only what you know God wants you to speak. Don't entertain other opinions in preference to God and His Word.

'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, Oh Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.' (Psalm 19:14)

3. The company you keep!

A believer is to live very differently from the rest of the world. Living in the right spiritual environment has a positive effect on our prayer life. Don't allow the devil to have a negative influence on you by watching

wrong television programmes and videos. Be responsible and guard against the entry of the spirit of this world. If our lives are filled with the things of God we will promote the Spirit of prayer.

Make sure you are wise with the company you keep! Being with the wrong people can influence you into thinking and doing the wrong things. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin and make the wrong choices. Spend time with those who will love you and encourage your faith.

'Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."' (1 Corinthians 15:33)

This of course does not mean we don't spend time with the unsaved. It is the will of God to bring others to Christ through our witness. But do invest time and develop relationships with those believers who will spur you on in God. Praying with someone who has already developed a life of prayer helps us to grow faster.

CHAPTER 5 - EFFECTIVE PRAYER

What is effective prayer?

'The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.'
(James 5:16b)

The Bible shows time and time again that incredible power is made available by praying the right thing in the right way. Enough power to transform entire nations! If you and I are going to see this tremendous power working here on earth then we need to understand how to release it.

The above scripture from James refers to a time in the history of Israel when the Lord allowed a drought for over three years because of idolatry in the nation. God worked through a man called Elijah to first stop the rain, and then, after a long season of drought, to pray for and release rain.

'Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.' (James 5:17-18)

Elijah was an ordinary man with exactly the same human make-up as you or I. He became extraordinary by praying and receiving what God gave him. There are immense possibilities for each of us if we pray what God shows us to pray. God wants to eliminate any small thinking or limitations we may have regarding the impact of our prayers. If Elijah could do it - so can we!!

***One man's prayer released the will
and power of God into the nation***

Looking back to 1 Kings 17 and 18, we see that the Lord first spoke to Elijah so that he would know what to pray. Once he knew God's will for the nation he could pray effectively and see the results. Today, the same principle applies. As soon as we 'connect' with God's will and know what to ask for, it will be done.

So, we see that the key to this earth-changing prayer is knowing God's will. Elijah walked with God and spent time with Him. Through knowing the Lord, Elijah understood His purposes and timing. God's plan for every one of us is that we know what He wants to do and when He wants to do it. Spending time listening to God develops our 'spiritual ear' and we are able to distinguish His voice above all others.

Effective prayer is hearing God and praying what you hear with faith

I remember hearing this wonderful testimony. Some parents I know were having a few problems with their five-year-old daughter, both at home and in school. She was becoming argumentative, rebellious and beginning to cause lots of trouble. Mum and dad were praying but didn't seem to be getting any obvious results. One morning, they listened to the Lord and heard Him say that what their daughter needed was a teachable heart. So they prayed and asked the Lord to give her this heart. They got what they asked for! From that time on their daughter has been so different. (Even the teachers at school noticed the positive change in her.)

All effective prayer comes from hearing Him first. This doesn't mean that we will always see the immediate effect of our prayer but it does mean that it will happen in due time. We often don't know what to pray but He knows precisely what needs to happen in every situation in life. The exciting thing is that He actually wants us to know too, so that we can be co-workers with Him.

Now, both the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word are vital in our lives if we are to know God's will and not be led astray into ineffective prayer. Let's go on to look at how God speaks to us through His Word and through His Spirit.

Praying with the Word of God

God's will concerning everything can be discovered in His Word. The Lord has given us His will for every issue in life we could ever face, from relationships to finances, business life, to bringing up children. It's in the Maker's Word! He will never act to contradict or change His written Word. Knowing and believing the Word brings confidence and security into our lives. Any person whose mind and heart are full of God's Word will be skilled and accurate in prayer. The more our prayers are filled with His Word, and therefore His will, the more fruit will be produced in prayer.

'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.' (1 John 5:14-15)

Ask anything according to His will and you will have it!

We have His word so that we can know Him and know what He wants to do. Without it, we would only guess about God and never really know what or how to pray. Just imagine if you didn't know that God loved you and you went by your feelings or by what other people say or do to you. Your life would be based on experience or man's opinions. The Word tells us that God has already shown His incredible love for us by giving Jesus to die in our place. Based on scripture, we know He loves us.

Whenever we read or listen to the Word we receive life, faith, and understanding of God's will.

Soulish or fleshly prayers are normally filled with our experiences, opinions or ideas and are ineffective! But prayers that are born out of knowing and agreeing with the Word will produce results. We need to recognise the difference and allow the truth to sort us out.

Let's look at one practical example of how the Word changes the way we pray. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 Paul exhorts us to pray for all men, kings and all in authority so that our cities and nations will be God-fearing and open to receive the gospel. It is clear from verse 4 that God desires ALL men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now, before I have the revelation of God's will, I may pray for one or two people to be saved in my family or town (my prayer is being influenced or led by what I have experienced in the past). However, as I meditate on the truth of God's Word, I see that God desires ALL to be saved. I pray very differently now because I know the will of God. Jesus teaches us to pray in this way - '*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*'. To pray effectively, then, I must throw out any opinions or experiences that don't agree with the Word. God wants me to ask for all to be saved - isn't that radical.

Praying with ideas, opinions, or human limitations is not praying the will of God. We must pray what God wants. Can you see how the Word sorts out our minds and hearts to agree with Him?

Praying God's thoughts

His Word is so powerful. Everything in the universe, whether visible or invisible, has been formed and created by the Word of God. He speaks and everything He says comes to pass.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven,

and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:9-11)

God has thoughts! This means that although we can know the will of God from scripture, which never changes, we also need to know what He is thinking and communicating today.

Elijah was given God's thoughts and will for the nation - that the time for the rain had come (1 Kings 18:1). A year earlier would have been the wrong time as the nation wasn't ready. Now was God's appointed time for rain and Elijah knew it, believed it, and asked for it to happen. Like Elijah, we can be sensitive to hearing God's voice.

Praying for physical healing is a good example to illustrate this. Scripture is clear that it is God's will to heal (Matthew 8:3). Jesus healed ALL who came to Him. Although we may know this and so pray for physical healing, God may want to communicate something else first. Maybe the person needs a word about forgiveness or a word that will minister faith where there is no faith. This will ultimately result in bringing about the complete healing that God wants. Remember the paralysed man who was lowered through the roof before Jesus (Luke 5:18). The first word the Lord spoke to him was about forgiveness, and *then* the Lord healed his body.

He knows everything, and we must continuously acknowledge that His thoughts and ways are much higher than ours. We can so easily make assumptions as we pray - I have done it many times! But we must listen and tune into God's thoughts. (See section on being led by the Spirit in prayer p58)

Faith-filled prayers are effective

Many people pray, but the Bible tells us that praying with *faith* gets results. It is an essential ingredient of successful prayer. Hearing God's Word personally will produce the faith we need in our hearts to believe for great things. The Lord wants to plant His Word deep into our hearts so that we have faith to believe Him and are therefore able to receive all that He desires to give.

‘So then, faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’ (Romans 10:17)

'But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.' (Hebrews 11:6)

Faith is a gift that comes from God. It does not come from natural things and can't be worked up or worked out - it's supernatural. Each one of us has received this gift of faith so that we can be saved (see Ephesians 2:8). We also each have a measure of faith that is supplied by God. This measure of faith is given to us so that we can fulfil His purposes for our lives. (Romans 12:3)

2 Corinthians 4:13 also tells us that we have the spirit of faith by which we believe and speak. The Holy Spirit dwelling within our spirit constantly believes that all things are possible and so helps us to believe and speak faith-filled words. There is an important biblical relationship between believing in our hearts and speaking out what we believe. Our faith must be spoken through our own mouths before we can see the results of what we believe (Romans 10:9-10).

We clearly see that it is unbiblical to say that we don't have faith or can't believe. That is a lie from the enemy designed to rob us from blessing. Many times we do need to receive faith for some specific need or purpose and can ask God to speak His Word into our hearts. By hearing the Word, faith comes.

We have choices to make everyday - either to believe God or to doubt, but as soon as we make the right choice to line up our mind, heart and will with the Word, we will be empowered to believe.

The Word tells us that our faith is the victory. The things God has put within us that we are believing and speaking will overcome and win in the world.

'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.' (1 John 5:4)

Faith releases the victory of Jesus into the world and overcomes all obstacles to the will of God. Of course, our faith is not in ourselves but in God. We must never underestimate the power or value of faith and live with determination to increase in faith.

The revivalist John Wesley emphasised the importance of faith in prayer when he said 'God does nothing on earth except in answer to **believing** prayer.' It's great to see that God has given each one of us faith, but let's see how to put our faith into operation and get results.

How do we get our faith to work?

'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith works whenever we have an assurance in our hearts that we have received something from God. We believe even before we see it with our natural eyes, and we act as though it had already happened. Think about a pregnant woman. She knows that the child is within her even before there is any obvious physical evidence. Her life begins to change as she prepares to make room for the arrival of the new baby. So true faith begins to prepare and make room for whatever you have received in your heart from God.

Noah was a hero of faith. He demonstrated that he believed God's word by building the ark. He lived and acted as if the flood was on the way. Faith acts! Whenever we pray, God wants us to receive the answer and begin to live as though it's done. This pleases God because it exalts His Word above everything we see in this world.

Let me share a testimony about how faith has worked in my life. During a time of prayer, the Lord spoke to me about having a new car. This wasn't my idea and so I had genuine faith from hearing His voice and not my own. I asked according to His will and thanked Him for this new car for quite a few months before I saw any evidence. I acted as though I had already received it. Because I was not on a salary but lived on gifts from travelling ministry, I had to have a financial miracle. After six months, the miracle happened and I was given money for a car - more than I could ask or imagine. Thank you Jesus!

Always receive what you have asked for in prayer.

'Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.' (Mark 11:24)

Your faith will grow!

God wants to grow our faith as we walk with Him. Jesus said that nothing is impossible for us if we believe. It's faith that makes all things possible. As we continue to follow Jesus, we are to be seeing more of God's promises and Word come to pass in our lives.

Constantly **hearing** God's Word will increase your faith. Something happens to your inner man when you hear and receive the Word. A powerful change takes place and you receive the substance of things

hoped for. Alive within you is the power to receive the answer or miracle that God wants to give. Only believe and you will see!

APPLICATION

1. Abide in His word

'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.' (John 15: 7)

To abide means to 'live in'. Jesus wants us to live in Him and His words to live in us. This needs to be a lifestyle and not just an occasional visit. His Word is to be alive in us every day. How?

- Live each day with Jesus and begin with a fresh submission to Him and His will.
- Meditate and feed on His Word.

Let Him minister faith to your heart and hear what He is saying to you through His Word. To meditate means to mutter, to ponder or repeat over and over. Joshua was told by the Lord to meditate on His law day and night. Take a scripture and meditate on it, for example:

'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' (John: 14: 27)

Speak this scripture out aloud over and over again, as if the Lord is talking personally to you. Add your own name:

- *'Judith, My peace I give you'* - remembering His Word is powerful and will accomplish what it has been sent for.
- You will receive faith that you have His peace.

Take other promises and words that you know God wants to live in your heart and meditate on them.

- With His Word in your heart, ask whatever you desire and it will be given to you. The Lord can trust our prayers when filled with His will.
- Don't allow any other words to compete with the Living Word in your heart. Then you will bear much fruit.

2. Pray His Word

This has to be one of the most effective, easiest, and most powerful ways of praying. Most of us doubt our ability to pray the right way and to say the right thing, but we can't go wrong if we pray the Word of God. Every promise is yes and amen in Christ! (2 Corinthians 1:20)

- Prepare your heart before the Lord and give to Him in worship and thanksgiving.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to a promise or scripture that is relevant for your situation. Be confident that He will guide you and show you what to pray.
- Meditate on the Word He gives and allow the Lord to bring revelation of His will to you through that scripture.
- Begin to pray the scripture out loud, confess it, proclaim it, and make it personal for you and the people you are praying for.
- Faith will rise as you hear yourself speaking the Word. Agree with the will of God and ask for it to be done on earth as it is in heaven. God will always honour His Word.
- Thank God for His Word working powerfully in your life and prayers.

Some examples:

Pray Psalm 23 over your life and family, For example:

'Lord, I thank You that You are my Shepherd. You are the one who is leading me and guiding me. My future is in Your hands. I shall not want. Lord, thank You that You are so good, so generous and kind and that I will never lack anything because You are my God. Thank You that You lead my family, look after them and give them everything they need too. You make me lie down and rest. You have green pastures for me, places in You where I can feast in Your Presence, resting in Your love and peace. Thank You Jesus, that You give me rest for my soul...'etc

Pray Colossians 1: 9-14 over your life and the church. For example:

'Lord, I pray that You will fill me with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. I want to know every day the things You have prepared for me to walk in, so give me revelation of Your will for today and everyday. May I understand the things You have for me to do. Lord, I pray that every brother and sister in our church will be filled with this understanding and wisdom of Your will. May we be a

people who walk in Your will daily. Father, I pray for my city and nation that You will pour out Your Holy Spirit and bring the people of the world to know and understand Your will for their lives. Reveal Yourself to them, show them they have a destiny and a future in You...etc.'

Remember, this must be personal for you, from your heart. 'Weave' around the Word, bringing in other promises which the Holy Spirit will remind you of as you pray.

This is powerful prayer that receives answers and changes you as you pray. I personally love to pray in this way. I know it pleases the Lord and I receive such an increase in faith as I pray His Word.

3. Proclaim His Word

This is different from praying the Word in that it is a declaration and not a request. Proclaiming God's Word with faith over our lives, families and nations is a powerful thing to do. The Bible tells us to take *'the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God'* (Ephesians 6:17) and use it to bring in God's victory.

In the beginning, God spoke and created the heavens and the earth. He now speaks His word through people to accomplish His purposes. This does not always have to happen in the hearing of others, but can be done alone in prayer.

Proclaiming God's Word accomplishes God's will in the spirit realm, bringing changes into the natural. Just as Jesus spoke to the storm, 'be still' and we too can speak God's Word into situations of strife, violence, lack, disease, etc.

'Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, And the Lord said to me: Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.' (Jeremiah 1:9-10)

Jeremiah was set over the nations and given a position of authority to speak God's Word. The Lord told him that the results would be a tearing down of the works of darkness and a building of the Kingdom of God. His Word spoken through us has power to remove the darkness and bring in the Kingdom of Light. We live in a spiritual kingdom and are called to root out, build and plant.

Speaking out His Word in faith will bring victory over powers of darkness. In Christ we are above all and are to bring His rule and dominion by proclaiming the Word over all things.

- Ask the Lord to give you the right word or 'sword' for the situation.
- Take it in faith and speak it aloud. Proclaim it, believe it and by faith see it accomplishing what it has been sent to do.
- Continue to use the 'sword' for as long as is necessary. Sometimes the result will be immediate and other times it will be progressive. Believe the Word above everything else. Refuse to doubt, for example:

Proclaim Ezekiel 37: 3-14 to speak life, and prophesy the Word of the Lord into a spiritually dead situation (v14):

'I speak to the people in my office or workplace - in Jesus' name - The Lord will cause you to come to life. He will put His Spirit within you and you shall live. I speak to the wind - the Holy Spirit, come and breathe on these people and they will live...'etc

Proclaim Psalm 91 over your life and your family. I remember during one of our church prayer meetings we were praying and proclaiming this Psalm 91 over a missionary friend who had an orphanage in Burundi. She and her children (most of them orphans from the war) were in great danger. Unless they left, terrorists were going to use violence to evict them. They had guns and grenades and intended to use them. We prayed and proclaimed this word from Psalm 91, declaring that no harm would come near them. God worked and brought amazing protection and deliverance. As a result, an army of soldiers was sent to stand guard around her house. God will remove powers of darkness and even governments in answer to His people's prayers and proclamation of His Word.

Never underestimate the power of praying and proclaiming the Word!

Praying with the Holy Spirit

'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all things that I said to you.' (John 14:26)

The Father has given the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is God and is equal to the Father and the Son. We can each know the Holy Spirit as a Person and not an “it”. He is the Spirit of Christ, bringing the reality of Jesus into our lives. He is our Comforter and Helper (John 15:26), who has come to live in us and enable us to live for Jesus.

Once someone has received Christ and is born again, they can ask to receive the fullness or ‘baptism’ of the Holy Spirit. This is God's will for everyone so that we can be equipped and empowered for service (Acts 1:5). Praying with the fullness of the Spirit of God in our lives is God's way and God's best for us. He anoints us to pray and brings life and power into our prayers. Without Him filling us, our prayers will become dull and lifeless, lacking in faith and vision.

At Pentecost the disciples were all baptised with the Holy Spirit and as an outward sign they began to speak in other tongues.

‘And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

Receiving the fullness of the Spirit releases the supernatural gifts of God into our lives. We must have the Holy Spirit together with every gift He brings in order to move powerfully in service for Him.

How to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit

1. First of all, a person must want to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. I know this sounds obvious, but this actually means to be immersed and filled with another Person and not with ourselves. We aren't always too willing to give up everything and allow God to be God. Remember that God waits for us to want Him- He works with willing hearts.
2. Confess any known sin and receive the cleansing power of His blood. Submit your whole life to Jesus as Lord.
3. Then simply ask God to fill you with His Spirit and receive by faith, He gives whatever you ask according to His will.

Give thanks that He has given the baptism or fullness of His Spirit to you.

‘If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’ (Luke 11:13)

This is not primarily an emotional experience, although your emotions may respond with joy. God's children always receive by faith.

Just as the first disciples received new Spirit-given languages, so the Lord has given you the gift of a new language. It needs to flow out of you. Open your mouth and use your voice. Begin to speak from your heart as the Spirit gives you the words. Praise Him and declare His wonders in your own language and with the new language He has given you. Expect sounds to come out of your mouth that have never been learned. Don't let your mind control or stop the language of the Holy Spirit.

I'll include my testimony here because it may help. I had asked the Lord to fill me with His Spirit, but there appeared to be no tangible evidence. The first word I spoke out in faith sounded so silly to me that I thought I'd made it up myself. After months of trying to find something different and more like what I'd heard others speak, I gave up. Then one day I was on my own with the Lord, and I decided to start believing that I had already received the gift. I spoke a few words in faith and continued to use these words on a regular basis in prayer. As I persevered in faith, the language grew in fluency and expression. Some people have an immediate fluency and others take time. Don't allow any unbelief or discouragement to deter you from using this precious gift. It is important to know that we need to be filled daily with the Spirit. Those who have already received baptism in the Spirit need to ask regularly to be filled afresh with Him (Ephesians 5:18).

Only the Holy Spirit can empower us and enable us to pray. Jesus is our intercessor in heaven and the Holy Spirit is our Helper and intercessor on earth, living within us. He is the life, power and inspiration of our prayers.

The Spirit of Truth

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth.

'However, 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 the things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you.' (John 16:13-14)

Once filled with the Holy Spirit, He becomes our guide or leader in prayer. He will never contradict the Word, so we can totally depend on Him to lead us into all truth. This can happen in many different ways - through a scripture, a vision, a tongue and interpretation - in whatever way He chooses. When we are 'blind' and have no understanding in prayer, we can trust Him to lead us and show us what we need to know.

He hears what the Father and Son are saying and declares it to us. He will only say what He has already heard and never says anything independently of the Father and Son. Everything He says or reveals to us will be in agreement with the written Word of God.

Being led by the Spirit and praying in the Spirit will mean that our prayers are full of the truth. We can know the will of God generally through the Word, but the ministry of the Holy Spirit brings the 'now' Word of God into our lives. The Spirit highlights the revealed Word of God.

Prophetic prayer or Spirit-led prayer

Jesus also said that the Holy Spirit would tell us the things to come. How wonderful it is that the Holy Spirit knows what is ahead and will tell us what we need to know. He will have us praying things that will prepare the way for God to move in the future. You may find yourself asking for something that isn't relevant for your life now, but later on you come to understand why you prayed that way. We are an anointed, prophetic people who hear God and pray into being God's future plans.

Someone once used this illustration to describe prophetic prayer that really helped me. For a train to reach its destination, the tracks must be laid down. Without the track, the train won't come. As we pray what He reveals to us, so we prepare the way for God to move in just like that train with His provision and power.

Whenever the Holy Spirit speaks, we can be sure that whatever He says will be successful. He never fails. Our part is to agree with Him and ask for it to be done - waiting expectantly for the answer.

What does it mean to 'pray in the Spirit'?

Paul tells us that we are to always be praying with all kinds of prayer 'in the Spirit'. There are many different kinds of prayer found in Scripture and each type, when used correctly, will produce the necessary result. At home I have a tool box with spanners, screwdrivers, a hammer, and lots of other things. What I have discovered though is that a hammer won't help if I want to tighten a screw. It's the same in my 'tool box' of prayer. There are different types of prayer, but all of them need to be used 'in the Spirit' if they are to produce the desired result.

*'.. praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...'
(Ephesians 6:18)*

So, all prayer is to take place in the Spirit. Romans 8:9 tells us that the Spirit of God dwells in us and we are not in the flesh, but 'in the Spirit'. This is good news!

'But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.' (Romans 8:9)

To be in the Spirit is, therefore a matter of faith for a believer – taking God at His Word. This is the first step to praying in the Spirit. We can't work our way to be in this position. I am not trying to be a Christian – I am. I don't try to be in the Spirit – I am.

This does not mean, as you well know, that we always live out our lives in the Spirit. We say things, do things and sometimes pray things that are definitely not in the Spirit.

If we allow ourselves to think worldly thoughts we will move in the flesh and our prayers will be hindered.

'For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' (Romans 8:5-6)

Fill your mind with His Word as you pray and confess the truth that He has given you the mind of Christ. Don't lean on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6) or open the door to fleshly prayers. Think right and you will pray right and be able to pray in the Spirit with your mind on heavenly things!

Pray from the river!

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'
(John 7: 38-39)

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be like 'rivers of living water' flowing out of our hearts.

God's Spirit flows from a believer's heart (spirit or inner man) and continues out through his soul and body. The word 'belly' is another translation for heart. Out of our bellies – deep within us – the life of God will flow. There needs to be an outlet for this river and God has chosen to use our faith together with our voices to release His power. Otherwise, the river

becomes like a dam inside a believer, restricted and stationary. Our mouth is the ‘tap’ which when opened will release the divine life.

There are some things that only our spirit knows. Things the Lord has put deep within us that our minds haven’t yet understood. God communicates with and through our spirit-man. We can pray in the Spirit by using our prayer language, His Word or the other spiritual gifts He gives. The Holy Spirit knows what is needed and can effectively communicate these things through us to the Father in prayer.

Many times we don’t know what to pray. The Holy Spirit will help us by giving us what needs to be prayed. He takes hold of situations together with us, releasing power to bring about His victory. This may be in the form of our own language or with languages and sounds that we don’t understand with our minds – tongues, even groans, sighs and tears. Our part is to trust and believe that God is accomplishing His will through us by using our faith, voices and yielded hearts and minds.

“Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27)

Praying in the Spirit in this way will enable you to partner with Him in releasing the miraculous power and provision of God. The words or expressions that are released will be exactly what is needed.

Being led by the Spirit in prayer

‘Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have freely been given to us by God.’ (1 Corinthians 2:12)

The Holy Spirit speaks to us in many ways, using impressions, dreams and visions, scriptures, etc. If He chooses to speak words to us, His voice within can sometimes sound like we are talking to ourselves. We learn to discern the difference between our own voice and His by knowing His Word, His purposes and character. Jesus promised that His sheep would hear and know His voice and follow Him (John 10:4). Every believer is designed by God to hear and know His voice.

For example, He may impress upon us the need to pray for someone in another country, or we may see someone’s face in a vision. Other times we can ‘sense’ a need to pray for a certain person. This is all being led by Him.

Obey His voice or prompting and there will be fruit. Of course, not every thought, vision and impression that comes to us is from God. But the more we know Him and His ways, the more confident we become both in recognising and responding to Him.

Remember that we don't need to fear the enemy. God gives us discernment and the wisdom we need. As we pray, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us in peace and victory. The enemy is easily recognised as he brings doubt, condemnation, despair and pressure.

When you have the witness of the Spirit within, then you know that you are on the right track with God. There will be life in that prayer and joy that comes from sharing in God's work. Just as the baby leapt inside Elizabeth's womb in response to the Child in Mary (Luke 1:41), so our spirits will witness and respond to what God is doing.

One key to being led by the Holy Spirit in prayer is to lay down our own thoughts or agendas and believe that He will lead. Pray out of your inner man and go with the witness of the Spirit. This is a learning process and will always require faith. Just trust Him.

Many times I really don't know where to begin, but as I yield to Him, trust Him, and start to pray, He will lead me. Remember that the Holy Spirit flows like a river and we cannot predict where He is going. We just need to allow Him to lead and go on this exciting journey with Him.

Test your prayers

There are a few ways we can test and see if our prayers are being led by the Spirit. Ask yourself a question: "if Jesus were praying now, would He be asking for the same things?" Listen to your words and make sure they agree with God's Word.

We know that the Spirit will never be negative or lead to despair and hopelessness. He won't lead us to pity ourselves, to be discouraged or feel useless. He will not have us dwelling on the problem, but have us praying the answer. Even when we are going through difficult times, He will lead us in victory, joy and peace. He brings healing and will reveal all the positive things that are ours in Christ. He won't let us dwell on the past, but will show us the new thing He is doing and always lead us to believe for the impossible!

APPLICATION

1. Repent of any known sin and ask God to fill you with His Spirit.
2. Receive by faith and give thanks for all the ways He works in and through your life.
3. Believe that you are in the Spirit and set your mind on Jesus and His will. Submit your thoughts to Him and thank Him that He has given you His mind.
4. Pray in tongues and in your own language. Let the prayer flow from the life of God within you. Jesus said that the rivers of living water would flow from within as you believe in Him. Faith releases the life of the Holy Spirit. Pray like this in the Spirit for at least 10 minutes, believing God's life is flowing as you pray.
5. Ask Him to show you what to pray for. Let Him lead you and by faith yield to His word, impressions or visions. Pray out whatever He gives you. If He reminds you of a scripture as you are praying, use it to ask for His will in whatever situation He has led you to pray for.
6. Once you know that you have received what you have asked for, wait for Him to lead you on to pray for another situation. Of course, if you have already something on your heart, present this to Him and let the Spirit lead you into effective prayer for that situation. Sometimes it's good to make a note of what you prayed and how you prayed for future reference and encouragement.
7. Praise Him that whatever He has shown you will be done and finish your prayer with thanksgiving.

Note:

For more teaching on praying in the Spirit see the chapters on 'Different types of prayer'.

'Hot' prayers get results

'The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.'
(James 5:16b)

In the previous sections of the chapter, we've been looking at what it means to pray effectively. Elijah not only prayed effectively, but Scripture tells us his prayer was earnest and fervent.

Imagine you're in a cold house in winter with no central heating. There's plenty of wood in the fireplace, but nothing to light it with. How unfortunate! If heat is going to be produced then you must have both fuel and fire. There is a winning combination that gets results in prayer - effective and fervent. One without the other just doesn't produce the results.

Fervent actually means to be hot, full of heat, having or showing great desire and emotion. Notice that Elijah wasn't casual in his response to the Word of the Lord to send rain, as if it were a nice idea. He embraced it in his heart and prayed strong, faith-filled, 'hot' prayers. His prayers were full of passion and desire to see the will of God done on earth. Elijah was determined to get results.

In the Old Testament we see that Scripture likens prayer to sweet smelling incense. In the temple, incense was burned by the priest on the altar close to the veil that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies. This incense was symbolic of constant prayer being offered up to God (Exodus 30:6-8). Without fire, the incense would not burn and ascend before the Lord.

It's the same with the prayers we bring before God's throne. If there is no fire, no heat or desire for the answer, then our prayers lack power.

Casual, cold and disinterested prayers will not move God to act. Scripture shows us time and time again that He responds to the genuine cries of His people. Blind Bartimaeus cried out so loud above the crowds that it stopped Jesus in His tracks. Desperation often leads to fervent praying. This blind man was not going to allow Jesus to move on without blessing him. That is fervent, determined and powerful prayer. And he got his miracle (Mark 10:46-52).

The fire of God

Of course, noisy prayer is not always a sign that the prayer is fervent. We can pray fervently, but quietly, and we can pray loudly but with no real heart engagement. If we don't connect with God's heart, volume in itself becomes an empty method.

However, loud prayer is scriptural and necessary. As God's passion ignites our hearts, fire will produce heat and our prayers will ascend to Him from our spirit, through ourselves, and out of our bodies.

'But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.' (Jeremiah 20:9b)

Jeremiah had the Word of the Lord burning in his heart to the point where he couldn't keep quiet. That's what God wants in our prayers: His Word to be so strong within us that it bursts out of us as we pray with passion.

Old way – new move

Fervent prayers full of passion and fire are not new. Jesus prayed like this in the Garden of Gethsemane. If we look at 1 Samuel 1:1-20 we see that a woman called Hannah was desperate for a child. She knew that talking to man wouldn't change anything. She had to go to God. She got up, went to the temple and prayed with such intensity that Eli, the priest thought she was drunk! The outward appearance was misinterpreted, but God knew what was reaching Him from her heart. Out of this woman's fervent prayer came Samuel, a miracle child who was raised to be God's chosen vessel for revival in Israel. Now I am sure that Hannah had prayed many times for children, but the miracle happened when she became desperate and fervent in her prayer.

It's exciting to hear and see the changes that are taking place in the church worldwide. Prayer meetings are no longer subdued or quiet places to go. God is birthing a holy desperation in His church to see revival and multitudes brought out of darkness. The Church is once again praying fervently and often loudly, for a harvest of souls and for God's will to be done in the earth. This is an old way (Acts 4), but new passion and vision is stirring within the hearts of God's people for His Kingdom to come. The fire is increasing and so is the power. Fervent, hot prayers are ascending before the throne, and God is answering with miracles. Let the Word and the Spirit create a new fire within you for the will of God, so that the cry of your heart is:

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

APPLICATION

1. Using these scriptures allow the Lord to put His Word deep into your heart. Meditate on His Word, yield to Him and receive His passion and vision.

'Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders, but you shall call your walls salvation and your gates praise.'
(Isaiah 60:18)

'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. For water shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.'
(Isaiah 35:5-6)

'And the glory which you gave Me (Jesus), I have given them (believers) that they may be one just as We are One.'
(John 17:22)

2. Now pray for the nation and the Church using these scriptures with fervent desire to see His will done on earth. Your effective, fervent prayers will make tremendous power available.

CHAPTER 6 - DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYER PART 1

This chapter is intended to be an easy reference guide to various types of powerful and effective prayer that can be used individually in a group or as a whole church.

The prayer of agreement

Definition

In this type of prayer, two or more believers agree together for the will of God to be done here on earth as it is in heaven.

Foundational Scripture

'Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.' (Matthew 18:18-20)

Jesus placed great value on the prayer of agreement, where believers come together in His name, at one with Him concerning His will. Living in this agreement, they have power to stop everything that hinders His will. They can also loose or permit whatever is His will and agree in prayer concerning all things. This shows us that Jesus intends believers to influence every aspect of life on this earth by releasing his government or rule.

What you need to know before you pray

'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.' (1John 5:14)

1. *What is agreement?*

Agreement with God is more than just mentally assenting to His will in prayer. True agreement effects our whole lifestyle. If God asks me to do something and I reply yes Lord, but don't do what He asks, then this is not agreement. I may **mentally** acknowledge His Word, but if I am to be in true agreement with Him, I will live His Word.

In Matthew 18:19 the word 'agree' actually means 'to be in harmony or symphony'. An orchestra will sound terrible if half play Mozart and half Beethoven. At times when we pray with other believers, we can be playing a completely different 'tune' to the others and definitely not be in harmony. Every available instrument (spirit, soul and body) needs to come together in agreement with God, both individually and then corporately. Now that is agreement!

2. Agreeing together

The will of God must be known before we can agree together. There are many things we already know to be the will of God, and so we can pray immediately with faith and conviction in our hearts. For example, we know that God has provided health, peace, joy, and everything we need for life. We can believe and agree with others for His best in these areas. However, if someone asks me to pray with them about finances for a holiday home in the Bahamas I cannot until I personally have the witness of the Spirit for this prayer. I know this is a silly example, but many people can ask you to agree with their soulish desires and not with God's will. I **can** pray with them for confirmation of God's will, but I cannot agree in prayer until I know in my own heart that this is what God wants to do. When each person has faith in their heart, which comes from personally hearing and knowing God's will, then we're ready to pray together.

3. Agreement with others brings supernatural increase in power

'When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.' (Acts 2:1-2)

The believers were together in one heart and one mind when God poured out His Spirit. There is a connection here with believers being united and a move of God. Great outpourings of the Spirit have continued to happen as believers have come together in one heart and mind agreement with God.

Deuteronomy 32:30 tells us that there is a supernatural increase in power for deliverance from the enemy when the people of God come together in agreement. If one can 'chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight', this incredible deliverance is possible when the Church prays.

4. Faith must be operating

As we agree in prayer, we must apply faith and believe that whatever we ask in His name will be done. The Lord promises His presence, as we agree in His name, representing His authority, character, and will.

Note:

As we live together in this 'lifestyle of agreement', God's rule will come with power through His Church. We're to spiritually govern and rule our cities, villages and workplaces for God through binding, loosing and agreeing together in prayer. Nothing is impossible as we believe and agree - incredible power is released!

Praying with other tongues

Definition

Praying in tongues is a spiritual prayer language given to every Spirit-filled believer (Ephesians 3:3). With this gift, a believer is able to communicate and pray directly to God – speaking using sounds, expressions or languages that are God-given and not learned with his mind.

Foundational Scriptures

'And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.' (Acts 2:4)

'For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the Spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.' (1 Corinthians 14:14-15)

What do you need to know before you pray?

1. This is a gift for you to use

We need to use every gift that enables us to live in God's supernatural power. Once filled with the Holy Spirit, a believer is to see this gift released and operating in his or her life. (See Luke 11:13 and chapter 5 on how to be baptised in the Spirit.) This gift can be a doorway to the other gifts of the Spirit - as the river of the Spirit begins to flow through tongues, words of knowledge, wisdom, healing, etc. can also begin to flow.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:15 I will pray with the Spirit, which shows us that Paul exercised his own will to pray in tongues. He didn't wait for occasions when he felt like it or was overcome with the anointing. Once we are baptised in the Spirit, the gift is there to be used whenever we choose. Paul also mentions that he was glad he spoke in tongues more than everyone else (1 Corinthians 14:18). He obviously highly valued the gift of tongues in his prayer life.

2. *The tongue speaks to God*

'For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.' (1 Corinthians 14:2)

When we speak in tongues, our spirit speaks to God and He understands what is being said. We are not addressing or speaking to the enemy. However, this does not mean that the enemy is unaffected by this kind of prayer. Tongues will release the power of the Spirit and bring the will and purposes of God as we pray. Therefore, the enemy will be defeated.

3. *Praying in tongues makes you spiritually strong*

'He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.' (1 Corinthians 14:4)

'But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.' (Jude 20)

Praying in tongues will build supernatural strength into your life with God. When praying in tongues, apply faith that this is happening according to the Word, you are being edified. We need God's Spirit to strengthen us in our inner man so that we can operate daily out of the power of the Spirit within us (Ephesians 3:16).

4. *Tongues magnify God*

'We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.' (Acts 2:11)

Our language can seem to be rather limited in praise and worship. We can use this gift to express praise and adoration in personal worship. At times we can be praising Him in languages that other people understand but we have never learned. The Holy Spirit knows when people need to hear about how wonderful Jesus is in their own language. I was once

leading a public prayer meeting and was speaking in tongues and English, releasing my praise and heart to the Lord. A lady walked in the back of the building and heard me speaking tongues in her dialect of Zambian. 'Lord, you are wonderful and I welcome you in this place.' Of course, I had no idea until she told me after the meeting I had been declaring the wonderful works of God in another language.

During corporate times or alone with God, we can use this gift to worship and praise Him.

5. *The Holy Spirit is our Helper*

'Likewise, the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' (Romans 8:26-27)

We often don't know what to pray or even how to pray, but if we allow the Spirit to pray through us, our weakness is replaced with His strength. The Bible tells us that when the Holy Spirit prays through a believer, it is according to the will of God. We can be sure we're praying accurately.

As we yield to Him, we become a vehicle through which His will is accomplished in prayer. Sounds or groans expressed through us are bringing His will and purposes to pass. The key to success is that no matter what language or expression is being released through our hearts and mouths, we **believe** that He is accomplishing His will. (See the 'prayer of intercession' in the next chapter for further study.)

6. *Hearing God through interpretation*

'Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.'
(1 Corinthians 14:13)

Whilst praying in tongues, we need to be sensitive to what is happening in our spirit. The more the gift of tongues is used, the more open and sensitive we become to spiritual things. As we pray, we can ask the Lord to reveal to us and interpret what we're praying. Understanding will help us to join with His work and also encourages our faith. Interpretation is not the same as translation. We know or sense in our spirit what is happening as we pray, often without understanding all the details. Our mind can also receive information from the Holy Spirit as He gives

understanding. This helps us pray in our own language too, and maintains vision and purpose. Develop your ability to move with the witness of the Spirit and receive the interpretation of your prayer language by practising. You may know that certain things are happening whilst you were praying, or you may need to stop and listen to God. Interpretation doesn't happen all the time. We need to pray in faith at times when we have no idea what specific things are taking place. However, do expect to receive interpretation as you ask.

Praying with the understanding

Definition

To pray with the understanding means to pray with revelation knowledge of the will of God. In this prayer, our minds are brought into agreement with God's mind and purposes. This type of prayer is not just with the mind but flows out from the life of the Word and leading of the Holy Spirit within a believer.

Foundational Scripture

'For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.' (1 Corinthians 14:14-15)

What do you need to know before you pray?

1. Your mind is important in prayer

Paul teaches that praying solely with the gift of tongues can leave our minds to wander and be unfruitful. So he makes a decision to pray using both types of prayer. *'I will **also** pray with the understanding....'*

It can take more effort to pray with our understanding than with tongues. We can speak in tongues for hours and not use our minds. Whilst this prayer is going on, we can dream about holidays or what we will eat tonight! The best and most fruitful way is to use both understanding and tongues. This helps us to be totally involved with the prayer. If our thoughts are wandering, we will soon lose interest and give up. Pray using your mind and not just your spirit and train yourself to be skilled in this type of prayer.

2. *Praying the Word*

Always take the Bible with you when you pray and use the scriptures in prayer. If your mind wanders, then read aloud and pray the Word.

3. *God-consciousness*

At times we can be so taken up with Him in the Spirit as we pray, meaning that we become more conscious of God and spiritual things than natural things. Here we will pray out things with our understanding that our minds haven't ever thought about as the Lord gives revelation and inspiration to us. We will be prophesying and praying His will in prayer (John 16:13).

It is easy to pray in the Spirit using both tongues and understanding for long periods of time if you surrender the time and agenda to Him. This prayer is so exciting, you will not want to stop!

APPLICATION

1. Submit to Jesus and ask to be filled with His Spirit, receive by faith and praise and thank Him.
2. Be led by the Spirit and take a scripture to pray out over your life or circumstances. Involve your heart as you talk to God and speak to Him from that Word. Move from tongues into understanding and be free to pray out what God shows you.

If you are a new Christian and starting out in prayer, it will help to keep the scriptures open and in front of you so that you can see the Word you are praying. The more you know the Word, the easier praying with the understanding will be. Eventually you will be able to pray from the storehouse of the Word in your heart. The Holy Spirit will remind you of what Jesus has said as you yield to Him (John 14: 26).

3. Focus your mind and heart on Jesus and give up your own agendas. Be God conscious and let Him lead you. Really enter into the prayer by faith and give Him everything...be completely abandoned to His agenda.

As He leads you, just follow Him and pray out whatever understanding you have. Once you've finished, you may want to write down some of the things you heard yourself praying and keep a

journal. Whatever is from God will come to pass. Test everything with the Word and believe that God's will has been done on earth as it is in heaven!

The prayer and command of faith

Definition

In commanding prayer, (sometimes called the prayer of faith), we not only pray to God, but also speak directly to change situations and remove demonic powers and obstructions. In this type of prayer a believer must first agree with the revealed will of God and then take direct authority to remove anything that obstructs His will on earth. Once all hindrances are out of the way, he asks and receives what God wants to give by faith.

Foundational Scriptures

'Now the next day when they had come out of Bethany, He was hungry, and seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves for it was not the season for figs. In response, Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.' (Mark 11:12-14)

'Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look. The fig tree which you cursed has withered away." So, Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain be removed and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things that he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.'" (Mark 11: 20-24)

Imagine the headlines in the local news in Jerusalem - Jesus of Nazareth kills a fig tree'. It's an unusual thing to do, but the fact that it was God who did it is even more difficult for us to grasp. He spoke to it and it died!

What you need to know before you pray

1. Everything God speaks will happen

'So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth. It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.' (Isaiah 55:11)

God's word is far more powerful than we can understand with our finite minds - God spoke and the entire universe was formed. He sends out his Word and it does whatever it was sent to do. When Jesus spoke to sick bodies, they were healed. When He spoke to the wind and waves, they were calm. He says it and it comes to pass.

2. Everything God gives us to speak will come to pass

'Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, And the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant."' (Jeremiah 1:9-10)

Jeremiah was given God's words to speak. These words had power to tear down and build. He was given authority over the nations and kingdoms to bring God's will and purposes into the earth. Now Jesus has raised every believer to heavenly places in Him, far above every power of the enemy. He has given believers authority in His name to tear down the enemy and build God's Kingdom by speaking the Word He gives.

3. The fig tree demonstrates what happens when the Word is spoken

Jesus only ever spoke the words His Father gave Him to speak. (John 5:19). He demonstrated to His disciples that not only were people healed by His words, but He also had authority and power to destroy the works of the enemy.

'... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' (1 John 3:8b)

We are called His believers to enforce the glorious victory that Jesus won. We have authority from God to speak directly to demonic powers and remove them. However, just as Jesus waited to hear and see what His Father was doing, so we must be led by the Spirit to speak and

address the enemy. The words we speak under the guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit will have power - to root out, tear down the enemy, and to build and plant God's Kingdom.

4. A time delay doesn't mean it hasn't happened

As soon as Jesus spoke to the tree, the work in the Spirit was done. Yet the visible or natural sign didn't come until the morning when the disciples passed by and saw the dead tree. Faith believes when there's no physical evidence. When we speak God's Word, it will accomplish what it was sent to do, and 'in the morning' we will see the change.

5. Faith in God moves mountains

Mark 11:22 tells us to have faith in God so that we can move mountains and obstacles out of our way. The scripture means to actually have the faith of God. The faith that He supplies to us actually is His faith. We release this faith as we fill our minds and hearts with vision of Him and His Word. Looking at negative circumstances is one sure way to operate in unbelief and is the wrong focus. We have faith as we look to Him, the kind of faith that will overcome everything.

To us, our faith may seem so small and insufficient, but you only need tiny mustard seed size faith to get a tremendous victory. Don't consider yourself but consider Him and trust in Him to do it. The faith you have in Him will move any mountain.

6. What are these mountains?

Jesus was not speaking about moving natural mountains. The Swiss Alps are just fine where they are! He uses something we can relate to in the natural world to demonstrate a truth about the spirit-world. In the natural, mountains are large and can seem almost powerful and rather intimidating. They prevent easy access or movement and may completely block the way. It takes effort and time to go over or travel around a mountain and they also restrict us from seeing what is beyond them.

It is the same with a spiritual mountain. At times there are demonic hindrances that prevent us from freely moving in the will and blessings of God. They are very real, (even though we can't see them with our natural eyes) and do oppose God's people.

We can face personal mountains of fear, sickness, failure or debt, mountains of depression, unbelief or condemnation. They try to dominate our life and restrict our view of God's blessing and Kingdom purposes. God's plan is to prosper us and not to harm us, to give us a hope and a future. He has good and generous thoughts towards us, great plans for our future (see Jeremiah 29:11).

Anything that blocks the path or view of God's blessing needs to be moved. Things like intimidation, fear and poverty are from the devil. God wants us to live with His view and perspective on life. Before you can deal with the enemy, you must first have faith that God wants to bless you. This only comes from receiving the truth of His Word. Be convinced that you have a wonderful future of blessing and provision in God ahead of you.

We will need to use this command of faith not just for ourselves but also for other people to see freedom from hindrances and demonic powers (see Matthew 17:14-21).

7. SPEAK to your mountain - don't pray about it!

Power is released as you speak directly to the need or problem in faith. A common mistake many Christians make is that they ask God to move the mountain for them. We ourselves need to take up our position and authority in Christ and command every mountain to move, speaking out what we know to be God's will. Let the Holy Spirit lead and reveal specific mountains and then move them. This can be done in your bedroom at home, you don't necessarily have to be where the problem is. There is no distance in the Spirit. What you say at home will change your workplace or situations even in other nations. See them removed through eyes of faith.

8. Pray and receive

Jesus then teaches us to *receive* whatever we ask in prayer. This is a definite request for a definite answer. Be specific about what you want from Him. Many people spend so much time thinking that they're praying, but never actually ask for anything. Believe that He will give whatever you ask according to His will and thank Him.

CHAPTER 7 - DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYER PART 2

Prayer and fasting

Definition

To go without food for a set period of time in order to pray, seek and receive God's will.

(Fasting coupled with prayer is a powerful spiritual weapon that will overcome the powers of darkness. It also helps to subdue a believer's flesh/self-life so that more of the power and victory of God is released.)

Foundational Scripture

'Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.'

(Matthew 6: 16-18)

(See also Matthew 17:14-21 and Isaiah 58:6-12)

What you need to know before you fast and pray

1. Fasting releases faith and power

After Jesus was baptised in the Jordan and **filled** with the Spirit, He was led into the wilderness where He ate nothing for 40 days. Scripture records that when He returned to Galilee, a change had taken place. He returned in the **power** of the Spirit. (See Luke 4:1,14)

There is a situation recorded in scripture where the disciples were struggling to see a boy delivered from a demon. These disciples had already seen demons submit to them in Jesus' name and people healed through their ministries. However, in this situation, much to their dismay, they failed to see the victory for the child. Jesus arrived on the scene, rebuked the disciples for their unbelief, then addressed the evil spirit and set the boy free. Later, when the disciples were on their own with Jesus, they asked Him why they had failed to set the boy free.

'So Jesus said to them. "Because of your unbelief. For assuredly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."'
(Matthew 17:20-21)

The reason for their failure was unbelief. Faith will move mountains, but whenever victory is not seen, Jesus says we can fast and pray so that our faith will be increased and the victory won. Jesus always operated in perfect faith and therefore didn't need to go on a fast to see this boy delivered. You and I are yet to be perfected in faith but have this weapon of great value at our disposal that will help to increase our faith.

Note:

Fasting doesn't earn anything from God. Jesus has already accomplished everything we need through His death and resurrection. Fasting helps to release His victory.

2. Jesus said 'when' you fast and not 'if'

Jesus expects fasting to be an integral part of a believer's life. He didn't say 'if you fast' and so it's clear that we should plan it into our lifestyle.

3. Fasting weakens our flesh in order to strengthen our spiritual life

When we give ourselves to pray and fast, we are determining to make God's will and Kingdom a priority. The flesh is weakened or subdued as a result and God's Kingdom purposes become stronger within us. Our hearts become increasingly consumed with desire to see Him impact the situations we are praying for.

There are times when we need new things in our relationship with God. Our prayer life may become dry and not as exciting as it could be. Fasting and seeking God for a deeper revelation of Jesus will bring us into a new place with Him. As we draw near to God and give up desires for other things, He draws near to us and meets with us in new and wonderful ways.

4. Fasting and prayer brings deliverance in a crisis

The book of Esther shows us that when the enemy is working to bring destruction, if the people of God will fast and pray together, He will bring

in awesome deliverance. There is great power released through corporate fasting that can affect and deliver a nation (Esther 4:14-15). Of course, this is true for individuals who fast to see deliverance from the attack of the enemy, both personally and for others.

5. Fasting and prayer for guidance and direction

There are times when, as individuals and churches, we need to seek God for revelation of His direction and will in our lives. As we give ourselves to Him, spirit, soul and body, He will speak and reveal His will to us (Ezra 8:21-23 and Acts 13: 1-2).

6. Fast and pray with faith

Believers are to live by faith and are therefore to fast by faith. We need to be expecting God to do great things when we fast and pray. Fasting will not accomplish anything or please God unless faith is operating. Be specific and know why you are fasting and believe God for the answers.

7. A fasted life

Going without food is one thing, but living a 'fasted life' for God and others is another. Isaiah 58 reveals that God is pleased with a life that gives up selfish desires to see deliverance and healing in others. This passage of Scripture is full of the blessings that overtake us when we live to provide for the poor and needy. We are not only to fast from food but also give to others so they can receive the blessings of God. Our heart motive in all we do must be for God's glory and we will have power to see many lives transformed by His power and love.

Note:

Briefly, here are 3 biblical types of fasting:

- *A normal fast - no food (see Luke 4: 2).*
- *A partial fast - with some type of food removed from your diet (see Daniel 12 – Daniel ate vegetables and no meat.)*
- *A corporate fast - joining together with other believers (see Ezra 8:21-23).*

I would like to add here that things other than food could also be fasted - like TV and media. Give the time you would normally take in leisure to pray.

The prayer of intercession

Definition

The word intercession means to ‘mediate’ or to ‘go between’. Intercession takes place whenever a believer represents a person or people before God in prayer in order to release His mercy and will into their lives.

Note:

It is important to note here that we can never override another person’s will, but our prayers do activate God’s power into their lives.

Foundational scriptures

‘So, I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.’ (Ezekiel 22:30)

‘Therefore, He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.’ (Psalm 106:23)

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

What you need to know before you pray

1. It’s not God’s will to destroy the land

The prayer of intercession has power to turn an entire nation to God! Our faith and vision as we pray is to be founded on this truth that God wants to bless and have mercy on our nation and on every person alive. Our job is to pray the will of God, which is **mercy** and not judgement.

2. Intercession is for you

God is looking for intercessors so that He can accomplish His will on earth. Will you respond to His call? One believer joined with the will of God and interceding for others will bring this to pass. This is not just a call to those who have a ‘special’ gift of intercession. Every believer is called by God to intercede. Jesus demonstrated to us the greatest act of intercession (or mediation) by reconciling man to God through His death on the Cross. We now intercede for others by drawing on His finished work, praying in His Kingdom and enforcing His victory over the enemy.

3. Intercession brings victory over the powers of darkness

We have authority in the name of Jesus to prevent or bind the enemy's work. As we intercede the Holy Spirit may lead us to address the powers of darkness directly and enforce the victory that Jesus won.

4. Intercession changes your heart

It is more blessed to give than to receive. Praying for others enlarges our hearts and fills us with God's compassion. He loves people, and intercession for the Church and the world brings a far deeper revelation of His heart. Join with Him in this high calling and be changed.

5. Intercession changes the world

Whenever a believer prays for others, God will be working and the strategy of the enemy will be defeated. When we, as the Church, take on our God-given responsibility to pray for the people of our town or city there will be change as the will and destiny of God impacts those people. God promises to heal our land when His people turn from sin, seek His face, humble themselves and pray (2 Chronicles 7:14).

6. Pray with faith

There are times in intercession where the needs and problems can overwhelm us. We need to constantly lift our eyes and hearts to Jesus. Make sure you stay in faith with victory in your heart and mind and pray the answer and not the problem.

Nothing is too difficult for Him and He is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

7. Understand the different expressions of the Spirit

§ Groaning (Romans 8:26)

To groan means 'to voice a deep, wordless and prolonged sound expressive of grief or pain'. These sounds in prayer come from the Holy Spirit within us and are expressions too deep for us to articulate with our own language. It is different from praying in tongues. We can choose when to pray in tongues, but when this type of prayer is needed, the Spirit will lead us from normal tongues into groanings. Jesus '*groaned in*

the spirit and was troubled' just before Lazarus was raised from the dead (John 11:33). This type of prayer produces resurrection life and power.

§ *Travail (Galatians 4:19 and 1 Kings 18:41-44)*

To travail means 'strenuous mental or physical exertion, tribulation, agony or anguish, and the labour of child-bearing'. In 1 Kings we see Elijah going to the top of Mount Carmel and bowing down to pray. He actually got into the same position that the women of his day used to give birth to children. Very unusual behaviour – he might have got a few comments from the locals! Elijah was praying in this way to give birth to the will of God. The natural position reflected what was happening in the Spirit to release the promised miracle of rain. He was labouring with the Holy Spirit, just like a woman will yield in labour to birth her child. Travail gives birth to miracles!

Another time we see this mentioned is in the New Testament when Paul began to 'travail' again in prayer for believers (Galatians 4:19). He had obviously used this type of prayer to initially birth them into the Kingdom, but now the purpose was to bring them to maturity. Praying this way brings souls into the Kingdom and brings believers to maturity.

§ *Tears (Psalm 126:5-6)*

This is sometimes referred to as 'liquid prayer'. As we are interceding for others God may touch our hearts with His compassion so powerfully that we will weep. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and also just before Lazarus was raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit will use your tears in prayer. The ground of people's hearts will soften as we pray with tears. This intercession is powerful and will produce a spiritual harvest.

Praying with perseverance

Definition

In this type of prayer a believer has a determination, that comes from knowing the will of God, to continue to pray and not give up until the answer comes.

Foundational scripture

'And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'"'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you?' "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.'" (Luke 11:5-10)

What you need to know before you pray

1. Insist on an answer

Jesus teaches us through this scripture that friendship was not enough to supply the need. It was an almost annoying perseverance that won the day! At times we need to go beyond the boundaries of 'friendly and sociable' prayer to a bold insistence to possess our rights as sons of God (Galatians 4:7).

This is not irreverent and neither is it presumption. We ask based on what we know is available to us from the Word of God. At times, Jesus will give our requests only when we become determined to get what we are asking for. We must exercise our position as His children and boldly keep knocking until we receive.

2. Boldness from knowing His will

We will not be able to persevere in prayer unless the Holy Spirit has revealed God's will to us from Scripture. With this determination we know that He has said it and so we can insist He does it.

3. Different stages in persevering prayer

'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.' (Matthew 7:7-8)

§ *'Ask and you will receive'*

This is simply asking God based on His promises. The scripture here means to ask and go on asking. Repetition is right and good as long as the prayer continues in faith! (Unbelief asks repeatedly for something and wonders if God will answer.) You may receive the answer immediately. If not, be prepared and willing to continue.

§ *'Seek and you will find'*

The prayer enters a new stage and becomes stronger and more earnest. There is a new determination to receive the answer. During this time the Lord may change your heart-motive to refine the prayer so that what is left is the pure will of God. If there is anything hindering the prayer, the Lord will reveal it as we seek Him. He may reveal other areas that need prayer, which will release your answer.

§ *'Knock and it will be opened to you'*

Knock and go on knocking until the door is opened. At this stage we have gone beyond 'it would be nice to see this happen' to 'this **must** happen'. Holy boldness takes over and you have one target and one aim – to get what you ask for. This prayer will often be loud. Constant knocking on a door to get an answer can be noisy!

Remember that we are not twisting God's arm but are praying for His will. He loves this kind of determination in prayer. Persist, don't give up, and the door will open for you.

CHAPTER 8

CHURCH PRAYER - WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN!

The power of corporate prayer

Something exciting is happening in the worldwide church of Jesus Christ. The revelation of the local church praying together is being restored and prayer meetings are becoming like the ones we read about in the book of Acts. Everyone is praying together, all at the same time, in one heart and mind in agreement with God. The result is that God's power is shaking the world.

God not only calls His people to pray individually but also corporately. More believers are catching the vision for this and are beginning to take responsibility for the corporate prayer life of the church. We see from Scripture that this is how the Lord intends it to be.

*Corporate prayer is today changing
cities and nations*

As the local church gather together and pray, the awesome power of God is being released on earth, often in ways that are taking people by surprise. The Lord is pouring out His Spirit in answer to prayer and the end-time harvest of souls is being reaped in all nations. As we ask, the Lord sends out labourers into the harvest fields – and regions, which have historically resisted the gospel, are beginning to yield and respond to Jesus.

Unite to pray

We know that in order to fulfil God's plan, every believer needs to develop a strong, personal prayer life. However, we cannot accomplish His purposes for our lives alone. We need to be part of a local church so that together we can pray and work to see God's plans fulfilled, both personally and corporately. Although each believer has an important ministry given by God, there is a revelation that we need to receive and walk in: *our personal ministry must be integrated within and serve the ministry of the local church*. United we will see God's plans and destiny for our church, communities and nation.

Prayer brings people together in heart and purpose. We are already united in Christ, but will continue to be strengthened in our call together as we pray. A people who pray together will have power to overcome obstacles and trials and will have spiritual understanding of the purposes of God. A praying church will be a powerful church.

Not only do individual believers have a responsibility to give themselves to corporate prayer, but church leadership must seek God and learn how to lead people into exciting Spirit-led prayer. It's the Spirit who gives life – the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). People will not want to be there if the meeting is boring and full of man-made agendas.

As we give ourselves to the work of prayer the Holy Spirit will do wonders through us.

Foundational scriptures

'When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place' (Acts 2:21)

'...they raised their voice to God with one accord and said...'
(Acts 4:24)

'Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.'
(Matthew 18:19)

Before the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost the believers were together in one accord. To be in one accord is not just an agreement of mind but also of purpose. They were in harmony with God and one another and were waiting for the 'Promise of the Father' (Acts 1:4-5).

The Holy Spirit came in power, the Church was born and the world was turned upside down! To be in one accord has great significance for the Church. Throughout history we see that God has poured out His Spirit as His people seek Him together and pray with a common purpose in mind.

A famous soft drinks company has a 'mission' statement, which aims to get a bottle of their product into the hands of every person in the world. Their mission isn't just to England or Europe – it's the world. I've travelled to some of the poorest nations where the people lack the basic necessities, yet they do have a bottle of this well-known drink! A common purpose will unite, strengthen and bring success to a people, even in the secular world

(think of the tower of Babel). This is what needs to happen in our church prayer meetings as we come together with a common purpose in Christ.

In Acts 4:24 we read of another prayer meeting where the believers were praying with one accord – in harmony once again with the heart, mind and purpose of God. They received what they were asking with such power that the people were transformed and even the building they were in was physically shaken (Acts 4:31).

The truth is that whenever the church comes together in this way, great victories will be secured. The early church was unstoppable and constantly expanding as God's power was released through their prayers.

We see another key in Acts 4:24. They all lifted their voice and prayed out aloud – all at the same time. It was noisy but is a heavenly sound!

Coming into a corporate prayer meeting for the first time without understanding what is going on can be difficult. I remember the first time I experienced this kind of prayer meeting. I was full of my own way of praying and didn't want to pray too loud or be noticed by anyone. I felt so awkward as I watched others who were lost in the prayer. The Lord had to change me and show me that this is the way He wants His church to pray. Quite a shock to the system!

Think of an orchestra again. The sound wouldn't be right if the violin section went on strike and wouldn't play. And if the percussion played a different section, then there would be chaos! Corporate prayer needs everyone to be praying with one common theme in mind. Each person in harmony with the Lord and each other, adding their prayer of faith.

Just as an orchestra needs a conductor, so too a corporate prayer meeting needs clear direction through an anointed leader. This enables everyone to enter into the prayer with one heart and mind.

What is accomplished through corporate prayer?

(Please see 'The prayer of agreement' in Chapter 6)

1. 'One heart and one mind' produces strength in the church

Praying together brings people into the revelation of God's will. Every local church is given specific vision from God, which the leaders need to communicate to the people. [For KFSW our vision scripture is Ezekiel 37:10.] If the church pray that vision together, the Lord will set it firmly into hearts and people will become in one heart and mind. This unity of purpose will bring God's presence and power into the church, with everyone moving together in the same direction. Weakness enters the

Body whenever there is division and differences in vision and purpose. Strength comes as we walk together in God's purposes.

2. Awesome power is released

The church agreeing in prayer brings a supernatural increase in power. Deuteronomy 32:30 tells us that one puts a thousand to flight, two ten thousand. Whole communities will be impacted by His Presence and power as we pray together.

3. Awesome authority is released

God has given authority to the Church to rule in His name over every principality, power and ruler of darkness. Led by the Holy Spirit, we come into agreement together and bind every evil spirit that is hindering the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The local church should take responsibility for their area or city, rule over the works of the enemy and loose the Kingdom of God.

4. Destiny is fulfilled as the church persists in prayer

A praying church will loose the destiny of God over individuals, cities and nations. In Acts 12:1-17, Peter was chained and put in prison because of his faith. The church got together and prayed constantly for him. God sent an angel to free him from his chains so that he could go on and continue to fulfil God's purposes. The enemy wants to stop the fruitfulness of both individuals and the church, but prayer will loose God's power and keep us free to serve Him and do His will.

5. A praying church will be a 'going' church

A praying church will be a church of mission and action. The Lord will do a work in our hearts as we pray, bringing desire and vision to go and fulfil the great commission - to make disciples of all nations for Jesus (Matthew 28: 18-20).

How to have effective corporate prayer meetings

Here are some key points that will help us to be effective in corporate prayer meetings:

1. We have to come to pray

This may be obvious, but the purpose for a prayer meeting is to pray and receive answers from God. There is a time for fellowship, for preaching, etc, but we need to guard this time and make sure that our prayer meetings are full of prayer. It may be right at times to hear a short word from Scripture to minister faith and direction, or to minister to the Lord in worship and praise, but we must pray. Don't let this time be stolen!

2. Every believer submitted to God

We each must be right with God before we pray. Allow time for people to confess any sin and receive the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, releasing His Presence and grace. Each person must be willing to give themselves to the corporate flow of prayer. When we are alone with God, we are free to go wherever He leads us personally. Corporate prayer is different in that we must lay aside our own agendas and willingly go with the corporate anointing and direction. Refusing to go with this or the appointed leader of the meeting will break the power of agreement and decrease the effectiveness of the prayer.

3. Everyone filled with the Spirit

The power and enabling in prayer will come from the Holy Spirit. Together we can each ask to be filled and receive by faith.

4. Flow together as one

Praying in the Spirit is a bit like being in a river that can change pace and direction very quickly. We need to be flexible and move into the unknown and sometimes 'uncharted' territory by faith. Agreement is where the power is, and so we need to keep in the same flow of the Spirit together. If the Lord says 'pray for the government' to the leader, then he or she will communicate this to everyone and we can all begin to pray together. We can't have someone deciding to intercede for India when the rest of us are praying for the government in England. Maybe the Lord will lead everyone into prayer for India later. The key is to remember that we are to have one heart and mind in this kind of prayer and we need to stay submitted to His purposes.

Whilst praying, individuals may receive prophetic visions, interpretation or words from God. During corporate prayer they can pray

out to the Lord what they're seeing without interrupting the corporate flow. There can be time for feedback afterwards.

5. *The faith dynamic*

During corporate prayer, the Lord will at times lift us together into a greater dynamic of faith. There is a specific anointing of faith released by the Holy Spirit upon the whole body to believe God for awesome things. When this happens, we need to act and ask for the things we can believe for. According to our faith, it will be done. It can seem like the Lion of Judah is being released and nothing is impossible for us. We have supernatural power and faith that will change nations - what wonderful and exciting prayer! We leave these prayer meetings knowing that God has done great things.

6. *Praise and worship*

At times, the Holy Spirit will lead us into praise and worship. This can happen before we begin to pray or even during the prayer meetings. Scripture tells us that the Lord inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). This literally means He comes to 'sit down, settle or marry'. Wherever the Lord is, there is no darkness or oppression. As we worship, He will manifest His presence amongst us, and from this place of intimacy together with Him, we can be easily led into the prayer that is on His heart. A people who are focused on Jesus will start and continue with the right perspective in prayer.

There is a type of prayer which is mentioned over 70 times in scripture called '*tephillah*' - which is sung prayer (2 Chronicles 6:20). At times this may be appropriate for us to do together. Led by the Spirit, we can sing prophetic songs and prayers of deliverance over people and nations.

Psalm 149 tells us that the Lord defeats the enemy and binds powers of darkness as His people declare His praise and proclaim His Word. There are changes that take place in the spirit world as we praise and worship God. Where Light comes darkness must flee.

Group prayer

Praying in smaller groups is also an important part of the prayer life of the church. There are some things that need to be carried by the whole body in

prayer, but at times smaller groups are the most effective way to pray and bring about God's victory and will.

Small groups can have their own 'identity', which usually comes through certain individuals sharing a common vision. For example, a group of people may share a burden to see, for example, the gospel preached in a school, for parents, or a workplace/business.

It's so important to understand the dynamic of group prayer. There are spiritual principles that need to be applied in every group to fulfil God's will for the group. Just as we saw with corporate prayer, we must have unity and agreement together if we are to accomplish all that God wants. Here are some comments and observations that will help to increase fruitfulness for group prayer.

Keys to leading group prayer

1. Group submitted to church leadership and vision

Every prayer group will operate in authority if they are submitted to God's appointed authority in the church. God's order is clearly established through His choice of church leadership and groups are to be careful to submit to and honour that authority. This means that the prayer group will be in harmony with the pastor and the vision of the local church for Kingdom expansion. Then the Lord will command the blessing and there will be an ease and flow in prayer.

There are of course situations where Christians from all denominations are meeting in workplaces and agreeing in prayer. Power in prayer will come from their heart submission to the Lord and one another.

Please note:

Intercession groups can become vulnerable to elitism, spiritual pride and manipulation. Be aware that the enemy would love to hijack the prayer in this way and so be careful to stay humble, teachable and submitted to church leadership. Keep in mind that the leader of the church, and not the intercessors, is called by God to lead the church. Intercessors are called to help, assist and encourage the vision of leadership through Spirit-led prayer – and are vital! Keep a pure heart and motive and there will be grace operating in the group to pray mightily for the glory of God.

2. Leadership within the group

Someone needs to be responsible to lead the group. Without leadership, the prayer time can become full of everyone's opinions or requests and the group may never enter fully into the will of God.

3. Thanksgiving and praise

End every meeting by giving thanks to God for His faithfulness. He hears and answers our prayers. Receive His victory over every circumstance and praise Him. Always keep the right focus and perspective – Jesus reigns!

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

