

BOAZ ADHENGGO

**PLAN**

*for*

**PRAYER**

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**BIBLE STUDY**

Psalm 46:10 *"be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"*

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**BOAZ ADHENG O**

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## Table of Contents

	Introduction .....	1
<b>I</b>	Reading the Bible Prayerfully .....	5
<b>II</b>	Prayer Groups .....	11
<b>III</b>	Alone in Prayer .....	17
<b>IV</b>	Repent and Adore God.....	23
<b>V</b>	Are We Prepared .....	26

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Prayer is defined as raising one's mind and heart to God, or the petition of good things from him in accord with his will. In prayer, we turn our whole attention to God, offer him praise and, seeking only his will, ask for what we need. We are obliged to pray, but prayer is also God's gift to us. It is how we grow in our friendship with Christ, who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, leads us to the father of mercies. Prayer is something natural. Each human being is created in God's image and, in spite of original sin; every person retains a desire for God. Yet, it is God who seeks our friendship and draws us to himself.

Knowing that even our best holiness is rags, but Jesus' holiness in us means everything, when we come in prayer we come as we are. *Unwashed*, messy and icky inside. Sometimes scared, sometimes needy, sometimes empty, sometimes bored, sometimes furious, or screaming for revenge. But we come. We come because God has already called out to us, through the Scriptures and by the good news of Jesus the Christ. We come trusting that through prayer God can change us, and can change the things that happen in life. We come trusting that God is with us and builds us up, that the Holy Spirit prays with us and for us. We trust that the Lord will lead us to lose our anger, lead us to repentance, lead us to being open to the Spirit's voice, lead us to love of God and of each other.

That is, when Christians bother to pray at all. A rather large part of the Christian church rarely prays. They are not much different from the typical agnostic. Both doubt that prayer matters, or whether God loves them, or doubt that they are clean enough, or doubt that God is able to make good things happen in this world. If that's the way you think, I challenge you to just do it.

Just pray, offering whatever you're thinking and feeling to the Lord. Whatever you bring, it's a start. As you pray more regularly or more often, the usual experience is that a strange thing starts happening to you. You start being more truthful in prayer, you start turning away from what you did wrong, your attitude becomes more confident, you start taking the time to listen, you start looking for the signs of divine dialogue in your daily life, you start hungering to read the Scriptures, you start wanting to pray with others, you think less and less about yourself. You'll find things to do and ways to prepare that help you be more open to God in prayer -- you don't have to do them, but they can help. You begin to let the *Holy Spirit* change you. And this is the beating heart of a relationship with someone you can't see or touch.

So when you begin, it's a good idea to start small. Or, to re-start small, if you're coming back to God or if you've been badly broken. Small means little *I-love-yous* and *thank-yous* and *have-mercy-on-mes*. They're short, like *post-its* or glances. But if they're heartfelt, God takes them for what they are: *real communication*. It's small, but sometimes that's all we can manage to do. As confidence or love grows, you'll want to share more. That will come. But first do what you can. Keep at it and grow it bit by bit: "*Help me learn to pray*", or "*Lead my friend to believe in You*", or "*get me through the day*". Hopefully, you'll be able to grow prayer into a part of your daily life, dotting it throughout your day. All great things start from somewhere.

God wants people to pray. Jesus set the example. He prayed. He taught His followers to pray, and how not to pray. He brought His closest followers with Him to keep watch and to pray, as He began His hardest day in prayer. The apostles call on believers to be in "*unceasing prayer*" (*Romans 12:12, Colossians 4:2; 1*

*Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20; 1 Peter 4:7; Philippians 4:6.*) Paul was a prayer, too (*2 Corinthians 13:7; Ephesians 1:16-23; Philippians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11*). The early church urged its members to pray intercessions for all. The early church even prayed for their government's rulers, who were often trying to stop them and (*rarely*) even kill them.

Jesus gives a great lesson on what prayer is like. It's like the woman who keeps knocking at the door until the judge comes out and addresses her concern, if only just to get rid of those annoying knocks. (*Picture Jesus smiling as he tells the story.*) But how much more would you be heard by someone who loves you? Many people today wonder if we should be pestering God with our prayer concerns. The answer is Scriptural: God says '*pester me!*'

There's a big difference between just thinking something and praying it to God. Prayer has a direction. You're not churning it in your brain or sharing it with friends or talking it over with a psychologist or getting in touch with your inner self. Prayer is directed to God -- acknowledging not only God's existence, but also a relationship and even a certain degree of trust. Prayer is not a waste of time because God is always hard at work in this confused, ambiguous world, to draw it toward His good purposes. Prayer is your response to God's work. If there's no one there, if there's no way to relate or even communicate, or if a wrathful god would strike you down just for trying, why would any one pray? There's an unspoken hope in each prayer, even if it hangs by a thread or is the size of a mustard seed that somehow the mightiest being of all thinks you matter. God's response also has a direction: you will not be left adrift or be led nowhere (*unless, like Israel in the Sinai, you have a lesson to learn from the drifting*).

Some think praying is a form of wishing. A wish is a desire or longing for some specific thing. Wishful thinking is expressed almost like a petition: I wish I could have it. It's sometimes said aloud so that the wish can be fulfilled by someone -- *anyone* -- who hears it. A wish is not rooted in reality, but fantasy; it is, as often as not, something the wisher knows they can't or shouldn't have. You want your wish to come true because it's something that would please you. A wish is not entirely a bad thing; it may be the way you dream of what is to come. But if the dream is stuck at the level of being a wish, it will not become anything more than a wish. You have to be part of making it happen. It is merely a '*wish*' when you ask God to send you a woman to love, but you rarely leave your apartment and even more rarely speak to a woman. It is merely a '*wish*' if you ask to be help you find a job, but sit around, lounge on the couch, and laze. God does not honour that. God honours it when you take responsibility for your part in it.

In prayer, the prayer specifically trusts God with the matter. You're calling on God to act, trusting that God will do what is ultimately best. It is a "*Thy will be done*" way of being. You're asking God to expand your understanding and insight, to give guidance, to grant forgiveness, to show you what gifts have been given to you, or to act for the sake of someone else. This is not about longings or fleeting concerns or self-puffery. Prayer is a crucial step in your doing your part of what God is doing in this world. For in it, you discover what your part is. Your will may not be done; something better may well be done instead. God makes what is prayed for become real, by working in you and in others to make it happen.

# **Chapter One**

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Reading the Bible Prayerfully

Private, prayerful Bible reading is intimate and personal. It's like exploration - it takes daunt and *derring-do* to dare to do it right. Be fearless -- ask God to show you, through the text. The very act of telling God about it turns even your bitterest thoughts into a strange kind of prayer. God's seen much worse out of us. You won't be struck by lightning for having even thought of what you're thinking. The decision to entrust God with the matter turns the strongest doubt into an act of faith and the most stubborn question into a plea of faith. Much of the Bible is actually made up of prayers. Many of the Psalms and sections of the histories and the Prophets are prayers. The New Testament letters contain short prayers, such as the one in *Ephesians 3:14-21*. The best-known prayer in Scripture is the one that Jesus taught.

The Bible can also be the hub of your own prayers. No method is needed, but for some of us, a method may help us stay focused, disciplined, and open-hearted. One of the oldest is '*Lectio Divina*' (divine reading), and it's geared toward helping us listen to the Spirit that speaks through Scripture. One form of it goes like this: first, quiet your mind down. If you find that hard to do, it often helps that you focus on taking deep breaths. Once you're gotten some focus, begin softly speaking a chosen Bible passage. Then, read it again real slow, this time listening for a word or phrase that stirs you, speaking again and again until one stands out. Then stay with that word or phrase, and ask why the Spirit is stirring you with it. Take what you're thinking, feeling, and remembering, and offer it back to God in prayer. Then repeat the process. You'll be finished when you get a sense of peace about it. Or, you may finish with a sense of exhausted disturbance, in which you know you've poured it out for now, but you're still being stirred in a way that may only be resolved as the day goes on. (*If so, keep going back to that word or phrase throughout the*

*day, and see what it has to do with your life.*) Most people who use some version of the *Lectio* find that at some time during it, the Spirit reveals something about living the faith. However, some prefer the term meditation to express this whole process.

Meditation is a vital ingredient of prayer. It may be said to be its better part. And yet it is mostly neglected. We appear before God, present our petition, and depart. Next time we do the same. We keep God informed in regard to our status; tell Him of things that need attention, and having thus delivered our souls, we close the interview. This we repeat day after day. Is there nothing better?

The psalms, especially those of David, sound the depths of Christian feeling. David passed through some soul-harrowing experiences. Once he was fleeing from Saul into the wilderness. There he penned the sixty-third psalm: the cry of a soul longing for God, for a deeper knowledge of, and acquaintance with, Him. David was evidently not satisfied with his prayer life. God seemed far away. He did not answer. David experienced the feeling of seeming to address nobody, in an empty room. Yet he longed for God. His soul thirsted for the living God. Was there no way in which he could get into real communion with Him?

Then David found the way. He found satisfaction. He learned the real meaning and method of prayer. Of this he speaks in Psalms 63:5, 6: *“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches.”* Note the wording: *“My soul shall be satisfied . . . when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate.”* David had prayed before. Now to prayer he adds meditation, and says that

when he does this his soul is satisfied. To him it is as “marrow and fatness,” and he praises God “*with joyful lips.*”

Many souls, like David, cry out for the living God. They are not satisfied. They believe that there must be something better than they are experiencing. They pray and pray and pray, and yet God seems far off. He does not reveal Himself. Once in a while they have a fleeting glimpse of Him, and then He is gone. Is there anything better in store, or is this all that Christianity and prayer hold for them? There must be something better. David found it.

“*My soul shall be satisfied.*” How wonderful to have the soul hunger satisfied! And this possibility may become a reality! David points the way when he says that it may be obtained through remembering God and through meditation. Most Christians remember God. They pray. In fact, it may be said, and rightly, that no one can be a child of God and not pray. But not many are practiced in the art of meditation.

They pray but do not meditate. Yet one is as important as the other. It was when David added meditation to prayer that he at last could say that his soul was satisfied.

Yet how much is lost to themselves and to the world because of lack of meditation! No soul can rush into the presence of God and out again and expect to enjoy communion with Him. The peace that passes understanding does not dwell in a restless heart. “*Take time to be holy,*” is more than a mere sentiment. *It takes time to commune with God, time to be holy. “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”* Psalm 4:1. The last statement needs special emphasis. “*Be still.*” We are too restless. We need to learn quietness with God. We need to be still.

“*My soul, wait thou in silence for God only*” Psalm 62:5. Let these words sink deep into each consciousness. “*My soul.*” This is addressed to every Christian. “Wait thou in silence for God.” This is a command and also a promise. Wait in silence. Wait in silence for God. Wait thou in silence for God.

Wait thou in silence for God only. And the one who waits in silence for God only, at His invitation, will not be disappointed. He will be satisfied.

What a wonderful invitation this statement is. You have prayed, you have poured out your soul to Him who alone understands. Do not say “*Amen*” and walk off. Give God an opportunity. Wait for Him. Wait in silence. Wait for Him only. And in the silence of the soul God may speak. He has invited you to wait. Let your whole soul be intent upon Him. Wait for Him only. It may be that God, through the still small voice, will make Himself known. Wait in silence upon God. To some Christians this is no new doctrine. They know what it is to commune with God. They have had precious seasons alone with Him. They have learned to wait in silence. And precious have been the revelations which have come to them.

The Bible clearly reveals several obstacles that can hinder our prayers. This is not to say that God only answers prayer when the conditions are perfect. He is God, and can do anything He wants, at any time He wants. No one can limit the work of the Holy Spirit, and divine answer to prayer has certainly occurred in some unlikely cases. However, our prayers may go unanswered for a number of reasons. If you have been praying diligently about a matter, and it seems as if God has stopped talking, maybe you need to re-examine your request. Maybe your request stems from self-serving motivations, or is simply

inappropriate; maybe there is unwillingness on your part to face the real issue; maybe the answer to your prayer would be destructive in ways you don't understand. Maybe it's short-sighted or too small. Maybe God has something better in mind.

Even when we don't see an immediate response to our prayers, we should be diligent and keep pressing on, believing with Paul that *"Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known"* (1 Corinthians 13:12). We must offer our prayers with a humility that conveys confidence in His ability, yet resignation to His sovereignty. We must continue to believe without attempting to manipulate God, always respecting the mystery surrounding prayer.

Prayer is problematic. Sometimes we pray for something, and what we pray for happens. Often what we pray for does not happen. Occasionally, what we pray for does not happen for us, but does happen for someone else who prays a similar prayer. How do we make sense of these experiences?

Even though we can trust that God hears and answers our prayers, prayer does not work according to a fixed formula: get your life in order, say the right words and the answer will come. If that were true, Job would have avoided much suffering, Paul would have been relieved of his thorn in the flesh, and Christ would have been spared the Cross. Between the two questions *"Does God answer prayer?"* and *"Will God answer my prayer?"* lies a great pool of mystery. While wallowing in this mystery, it is important for us not to lose sight of the purpose of prayer. God is more important than any answer to our prayer.

## **Chapter Two**

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### Prayer Groups

Christians pray alone. They pray in large groups in worship, and sometimes even fill stadiums to pray together. But today's Christians often find their strongest moments of prayer in small groups with a few other believers. They do other things in a small group, too: Bible study, singing, and just being a small community together with each other. Prayer is a part of a larger small-group picture.

Small-group prayer is very flexible. Most of what is done in private prayer or in public worship prayer or concerts of prayer can also be done in small groups. Plus there's the flexibility to go from one way of praying to another, which keeps giving different angles to *our small-collective relationship* with God. Each group develops its own rhythm, style, schedule, and history. If it is a group that meets on a regular basis, it needs a clear purpose that the members invest themselves in.

One of the most important times for a prayer group actually takes place before prayers. At that time, discuss what you're going to pray about. Have anyone present share burdens or give praise, always being encouraged to be specific rather than general. This enables the group to pray "in agreement", together in hopes and goals. Also, different aspects of complicated prayer subjects can be given out to different people. That's not to say that the prayers should be limited only to what's been discussed. Believers are often moved by the Spirit to take a different direction. The *pre-prayer* discussion is not there to put a straightjacket on prayer time, but to better inform and to clear the air.

People in a prayer group are free not to take part in any particular prayer or any specific exercise or approach. Most often, they'll just *opt-out* by shutting off their mouths and minds

without anyone knowing about it. But sometimes, the objection comes out in the open. When it does, before going into prayer, find out why, and what lies behind it. The group may agree to adjust, or further discussion is needed, especially if it is divisive. The discussion can teach valuable lessons about the group's character and about prayer. Sometimes the best solution is for the member to exercise their right not to take part in that particular prayer or method, and for the rest to continue on.

Most prayer group activities are done in a ring or circle. It's the most natural formation to take: each one faces most of the others, looking them in the face. It is a visible oneness (*the ring*) with visible parts (*each person*). It becomes even more so when the hands are linked, since the people next to you in a ring, the two folks you're least likely to be looking at, are the ones drawn to you by touch. Some see something mystical about the ring/circle, but its '*magic*' is really simple human togetherness -- unity. God takes that and blesses it, since it's what God hopes to create between us. That is what makes prayers powerful.

The procedure that most people find most natural is to stand together in a ring, and have each person share for however long is needed, then going to the next person in the ring, until done. If hands are linked, one person can pass their turn on to the next simply by squeezing the next person's hand or softly saying something. Another common way is for each to share freely, in no particular order, waiting until the person speaking is done. Those who have experience in leading groups say that these are fine ways to begin, but it tends to become a rut, or concentration spans lapse. It helps to move from one procedure of prayer to another. For example:

***Sentence prayers:*** each person, one at a time, offers a brief specific concern, praise, or thanks to God, ending with "Amen" or some other refrain. No explaining it, just saying it and leaving it. (Allow those who don't want to share to say just "Amen" so it passes on to the next person.)

***Silent intercessions:*** The leader reads a general concern, and is then silent. Time is then taken to silently pray for specific people, actions, and ministries involved with that general concern. Then, after a while, the leader speaks a word of the Bible relating to that concern, and a brief prayer on it.

***Prayer for witness:*** Each person in the group names one person that they most want to see turn to Christ. This would be someone from work, hobbies, family, or other non-religious activities, that they meet in the course of their daily lives. After each one is spoken, the group then prays for an opportunity for a Christian's witness to hit home.

***Two-by-two:*** at the start, names are randomly drawn to be matched in pairs. The pairs then go to separate locations from the other pairs (like, say, one in the kitchen, another on the deck, another in the garden, etc.). The pair then takes time to minister, share, and pray with each other.

***Strong personal needs:*** Sometimes, in a group setting, someone will be so hurt by life (*or so moved by the group or its actions*) that they will break down. Other times, composure will hold, but the need for prayer is acute and prayer is requested. Either way, see to it that the person is sitting down securely. (*This sitting is known in some circles as the 'hot seat'.*) Ask that person to start praying. Then bring the others present to gather around him/her,

laying hands and praying until a sense of comfort about the matter comes over him/her, or that person brings it to an end.

A group can be focused as an intercessor group, but they usually have much more to them than their prayer task, such as friendship, accountability, Bible study, and faith education. The patterns and balance will change with time and with new members.

A prayer circle of 5 to 12 people is about the right size. If it's smaller, it will sputter when members are absent, and will tend to think in a more ingrown way. If it's larger, the members lose touch with each other, or prayer time can get too complex and wearying. If the group gets too big, try splitting it into two groups that meet separately, each led by someone who has had responsibilities in the original group. Then pray that each group grows. It's a good idea for the groups to keep in touch regularly after that, exchanging prayer concerns and/or taking on a service activity together.

Christians can therefore pray for the things Jesus taught – for God's name to be revered, his rule to come, and his will to be done; for daily bread, forgiveness of sins, and protection from evil (*Matt. 6:9–13*). Here 'daily bread' doubtless includes the 'bread of life' (John 6) and Holy Spirit (*Luke 11:1–13*), given to enable believers to live as they should (*Rom. 6:15–8:14, Gal. 5:13–26, 2 Pet. 1:3–11*).

## **Prayer Spaces**

A personal space for prayer can really be just about anywhere that you can stay (*relatively*) undisturbed. Perhaps there's a quiet place in a park or woods or field, or a garden (*as Jesus did*).

Maybe there's a really good rock to sit on, overlooking the beach and the sea. Your place may be up on the roof of a flat-roof apartment building or dorm, or maybe on a balcony or even a fire escape. Indoors, maybe it's the bedroom your children grew up in and left, or a corner of the den. Or maybe all you can muster up is a closet. God doesn't care if there's still a mop in it, what matters to God is that you are in it. When you get down to it, it's only a prayer room when someone's praying in it. (*You may be more likely to use the room if it's cleaned out and set aside just for prayer.*)

The prayer space is not chosen so people can see you pray, nor is it a place to relax and fuzz out. It is a place to lose your inner self or to lose track of time, a place to wrestle with the Creator, “*to feel one's body made a temple of the Holy Ghost*”. What matters most is not the place itself; what matters is that the place helps you to be able to pay full attention to the most important of all relationships. The relationship with God!

## **Chapter Three**

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Alone in Prayer

Consider the influence of just one person. James 5:16 states, “*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*” James goes on to support that idea with the example of Elijah. “*Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years*” (verse 17).

Like us, Elijah was a weak and sinful person, but he loved a great and powerful God. He prayed that it would not rain, so that the degenerate king of Israel, Ahab, would be brought to his knees before God.

God heard Elijah’s prayer, and He answered specifically. For three and a half years there wasn’t a drop of rain. In desperation the people turned to God, and Ahab himself finally admitted his need for divine intervention. Elijah prayed again. This time he prayed it would begin to rain. And it poured. Through Elijah, James clearly makes the point that “*the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*”

Do you believe this? Do you believe that your prayer has the power to make it rain, both physically and spiritually? If so, even if no one joins with you, you need to begin praying for revival for your community, persistently and expectantly.

Prayer has always been the precursor to restoration. If we commit ourselves to prayer, there is no limit to what we can see God do. Genesis 32:26 gives us Jacob’s instructive prayer to God: “*I will not let you go unless you bless me.*” This is the kind of fervency and persistence that needs to characterize our prayers. Jacob was saying “*You can’t make it rough enough for me to stop. I am holding on until You fulfill Your promises.*”

One key way of getting deeper into your relationship with your Creator is to get deeper into prayer. But sometimes, we're afraid to ask questions about prayer, especially to ask ourselves about how we pray so we can at least find out where we're at right now. Thinking about prayer can carry us further into the mystery of what it's like to have an actual relationship with someone we can't contact with our senses. God places relational treasures at many spots along our journey.

This is what Jesus was teaching about prayer when He encouraged His followers, “*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you*” (Luke 11:9). Knocking - by definition - is persistent repetition; this is extremely difficult for us to do. We are addicted to the short term, and with every advance in technology and convenience, and every new button added to our ‘remotes’, that habit intensifies. We pray a while. When no obvious answers are forthcoming, we become distracted or discouraged and quit. But lasting revival is the fruit of persistent prayer: weeks, months, sometimes years of petitioning God for a spiritual brushfire to break forth to our communities converting the lost, quickening believers, and drawing the focus of the entire community to Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons, we in our modern society do not receive more answers to prayer, is that we do not put our hearts into our prayers! One of the key Scriptures we can cite is *Hosea 7:14*, which describes one reason that God did not hear the prayers of the ancient Israelites. The *Moffatt* translation perhaps renders

this verse the most clearly: “*They never put their heart into their prayers.*”

What about us? Do you and I pray with our entire being? Or do we just rattle off a memorized prayer like some pagan chant, or perhaps sleepily mumble a few half-hearted requests to God just before drifting off to sleep?

Again, remember Jesus’ example of getting up early to pray to the Father! For prayer was vitally important to Christ. That is why He apparently put it first on His schedule - before anything else could interfere. And He probably came back to God repeatedly as the day progressed. The book of Hebrews tells us about Christ’s passionate, heartfelt prayers: “*Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death... was heard because of His godly fear*” (5:7).

It is good to go to a “*private place*” to pray as Jesus instructed in *Matthew 6*. Alone, we can occasionally cry out to our Creator to help us, to chasten us, to deliver us from temptations or difficulties where only the help of God Himself can fully take care of the situation. The last night of Jesus’ human life, when He knew He was about to be arrested and crucified, He poured out His being to the Father in fervent prayer for help and deliverance: “*And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground*” (Luke 22:44).

Jesus was crying out to His Father in such an intense and passionate manner that some of His capillaries may have literally burst - filling certain sweat ducts with blood! In our modern, secular, hedonistic, “*laid- back*” society, we need to grasp that the truly vital issues of life are not material! Rather, they are spiritual - having to do with our Creator and with all eternity. They are certainly worthy of getting excited about!

So let us put our hearts into our prayers. Let us be fervent. Let us be passionate as we pour out our hearts to the awesome Personality who wants to be our real Father: “*the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity*” (Isaiah 57:15).

A genuine man or woman of God is one who has totally surrendered to the will of the Creator. Through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us: “*But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word*” (66:2). This attitude of seeking God’s will rather than our own - *of total submission to our Heavenly Father* - is vital to our prayer life if we are to receive constant and powerful answers. Note again Jesus’ attitude in one of His final prayers to God while He was still in this human flesh: “*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done*” (Luke 22:42).

Do you want to truly grow spiritually - “*till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13)? If so, you need to spiritually “*wrestle with God*” in your prayers as Jacob literally wrestled with Him and prevailed (cf. Genesis 32:24 - 32). We need to engage Him

in long, thoughtful conversation about how we can more fully yield to Him, walk with Him and honour Him in our lives. We need to constantly ask God to help us fulfil the great purpose for which we were born.

It is fine - *within limits* - to pray for “*physical things*.” But the ultimate purpose of prayer is to help us focus on God, yield to Him and surrender our will to His as we cultivate a vital, interactive relationship. In this way, He becomes increasingly real to us. Through constant and heartfelt Bible study and prayer we must seek God’s will. We must grasp that our past ideas and attitudes about God and religion in general need much improvement. God tells us through Isaiah: “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55:8 - 9). And the Apostle Paul instructed: “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 2:5).

Learn to walk with Him, talk with Him, quietly “*commune*” with Him off and on all day long. Sincerely ask Him to mould you into His own image. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write: “*But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand*” (Isaiah 64:8). The approach of yielding to God as you pray, of asking Him to rebuke and chasten and fashion you, is one of the vital keys to really powerful prayer.

## **Chapter Four**

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Repent and Adore God

Although from time to time God hears the prayers of anyone who sincerely cries out to Him in time of need, He is not bound by His Word to do this. That is why men and women sickened by the horrors of war have demanded: “*Where was God at the Battle of Leningrad, when hundreds of thousands perished?*” They have asked: “*Where was God when the Jews, Poles, Czechs, Danes and Dutch were being herded into gas chambers in World War II?*”

God’s Word answers: “*Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear*” (Isaiah 59:1–2).

The same principle is found in the New Testament. A man Jesus healed of blindness stated: “*Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him*” (John 9:31). It is not our job to psychoanalyze or “*spiritually dissect*” those who have not had their prayers answered in the past. But we all have a duty to ask ourselves: “*Do I worship the true God? Do I do His will?*”

Jesus said: “*If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments*” (Matthew 19:17). Do you keep the Ten Commandments? Or do you make excuses? The Apostle John was inspired to write: “*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 3:22). This New Testament scripture clearly shows us that we receive answers to our prayers when we keep God’s commandments!

We need to constantly thank and praise God for every good gift and for His help and blessing in every situation (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). One of the qualities that made King David a man after “*God’s own heart*” was the sincere love, worship and adoration that he continually expressed toward the great Creator who blessed him, sustained him and guided him. The entire book of Psalms is literally filled with David’s prayers of worship and adoration. Notice Psalm 18: “*I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies*” (vv. 1–3).

Why not truly worship Jesus Christ - through whom God the Father created everything that is (cf. John 1:1–3; Ephesians 3:9)? Why not worship the one who *emptied* Himself of His divine glory in order to set us a perfect example (cf. Philippians 2:7–9)? Why not worship our merciful and faithful High Priest (*Hebrews 2:17–18*), who willingly died for us on the cross? Why not worship Him?

Nehemiah 9:5b-6 “*Stand up and praise the LORD your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and their entire starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*”

## **Chapter Five**

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Are We Prepared?

What does the word prayer stir up in you? Does it make you feel comforted and at peace, or does it make you feel nervous and guilty?

There's nothing at all wrong with asking God to let you know if and when what you pray for will be done. Just understand that you might never know. God is under no obligation to you, nor do you have any 'right' to know. When we really stop to think about prayer, we should quickly realize what a privilege it is. God does not have to communicate with us and doesn't need for us to communicate with Him. But, He chooses to. That's the love of God - He chooses to involve us in His work. He wants to have a relationship with us. He wants to show Himself mighty in our lives and intercede on our behalf time and time again. Psalm 139:23-24 sets the correct attitude, "*O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*".

One of the game changers when it comes to prayer is recognizing how much God loves us and wants to hear from us. When we stop to remember how much God longs for us to walk so closely with Him, it really does change everything.

Take a moment to read Ephesians 3:16-18:

*<sup>16</sup> I pray that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power in the inner man through His Spirit, <sup>17</sup> and that the Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love.*

Prayer doesn't have to be something you are scared of or anxious about. If you remind yourself of your sure footing in the love of Christ, your prayers will hopefully come a little easier and be a little bolder. May God deepen your grasp of His love as you learn to boldly approach Him in a renewed devotion to prayer.

Although Jesus was fully God while He was on earth, Scripture also teaches that He *“kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men”* (Luke 2:52). Prayer was Jesus' communication to God the Father while He lived on earth. Prayer was His means, along with the Holy Spirit, of knowing and carrying out God's will. Prayer was a vital part of the intimate fellowship between God the Father and Christ His Son. If Jesus, the Son of God, was constantly dependent upon the Father through prayer, how could we possibly think it is not necessary for us?

Our relationship to God through Jesus is the key to healthy and effective prayers. We need to be vertically aligned with God through the cross before we can do anything else.

As Scripture says, *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”* (Titus 3:5-7).

With this in mind, it is important to make sure we submit to God's plan and are saved God's way through Jesus, not on our own. Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3). Salvation comes from the Lord, not man. It is a spiritual transformation

God brings about within someone's heart and life. No individual or church can manufacture it. But God does it as we repent and trust Christ alone by faith. It is to my understanding that in this book, I might have spoken to all different kinds of people. Non-believers, seekers, new believers, seasoned Christians, wayward Christians - you name them. No matter where you are, though, take a moment and stop and evaluate your relationship with Jesus.

If you aren't certain of your relationship to God through Jesus, would you reach out to your small group leader or someone on your church staff to begin to talk this out with them? They will be honoured to help you.

**Romans 8:25-28** *but if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

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