

BECOMING MATURE IN CHRIST

The Keys of Spiritual Development

Cultivating the Habit of Prayer

Luke 18:1

Introduction: **Luke 18:1** Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, (Luke 18:1 NAU)

Cultivating a rich prayer life, which is essentially fellowship and conversation with God, has many facets, all of which form a full experience of praying without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17), and which must be cultivated in the life of a believer if there is to be any hope of developing spiritual maturity.

I. Appointed Times of Prayer & Intercession

- A. All the model characters of the Bible practiced regular times of focused prayer
Moses, David, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, to name a few.
Exodus 33:7-11, Ps 56:7-8, Luke 22:39, many references in Paul's letters
- B. These times of prayer included specific intercession for:
The lost, ministry, guidance, new adventures, political rulers, spiritual leaders
- C. Among Biblical examples, these tend to be at regular times of the day set aside for that purpose (Daniel 6:10-11 three times a day)

II. Urgent Times of "Emergency Prayer" and Protracted Prayer

- A. Nehemiah is the all-time favorite reference for short, urgent prayer in crisis
Nehemiah 2:1-5
- B. Daniel serves the example of weeks long prayer and fasting in a time of crisis
 - (1) Daniel 10:1-21 Daniel prays 21 days for understanding,
 - (2) Luke 6:12-13 Jesus chooses the twelve
- C. We must become aware of, and learn the practice, of genuine expectation of God's intervention when seconds count, as well as periods of trial when answers are desperately needed.
 - (1) You do under pressure what you are most used to doing
 - (2) If you make talking things over with God a habit it will be natural in crisis

III. Developing a "God Consciousness" and Continuous Prayer Without Ceasing

- A. The awareness of the presence of God in your life & everything you do
 - (1) John 15—abiding in the Vine, resting in the presence & life of Christ
 - (2) Worship as a regular response to life: all that God has made and done
- B. Maintaining a running "stream of consciousness" in communion with God
Prayer without ceasing, 1 Thess 5:17, Philippians 4:6-7
- C. Inviting Him into every situation and circumstance and recognizing your absolute dependency upon Him for the successful accomplishment of every thing you do

Conclusion: Cultivating a life of prayer is more than just "saying prayers." In fact, it isn't "saying prayers" at all; it is developing a friendship with God that invites Him into all of life in a running conversation punctuated by special times during the day of focused intercession and occasional times of protracted prayer for special needs. It incorporates a sense of His presence, a natural worship of His Person, and a conscious dependence on His power for all of life.

KEY VERSES On 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Phi 4:6-7 NAU)

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

(Rom 8:26-27 NAU)

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

(John 15:7-8; 15:16 NAU)

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(1Ti 2:1-4 NAU)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) What is your best time of day for focused intercession & personal prayer?
- 2.) How do you view prayer? Is it a ritual? A means of getting things you want? Simply quiet meditation?
- 3.) What should we “always pray and not faint?” What good does prayer do?
- 4.) Discuss some examples of your experience of prayer without ceasing.
- 5.) How did you pray the last time you were in crisis or needed special wisdom for a decision?
- 6.) How do you hear from God when answers come? How do you know it is God Who is speaking?
- 7.) How do you incorporate the Scriptures into your praying and intercession?

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

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