

“...pray without ceasing...”

1 Thessalonians 5:17

A drop of water becomes a steady drip. A drip becomes a trickle. A trickle becomes a small flow. The small flow joins another small flow. They race together to meet other small flows. And as time inevitably passes, the drop is part of a raging river that cannot be stopped by anything-- not man, nor beast, nor mountain. So in the ancient history of our earth, the Grand Canyon of Arizona was formed by the Colorado River... From rim to rim, the canyon measures 600 feet to an awe-inspiring 18 miles wide. It is a mile deep, and the canyon itself is over 277 miles long. It started with something without much strength on its own. Something small. Something simple. A drop.

So it is with prayer. A small prayer. A simple prayer. A prayer that you pray sincerely and without ceasing. It joins your other prayers, and soon your prayers are a powerful voice that transcends all time. Because you speak directly to God, your prayers move mountains. Your prayers carve the future and ring gloriously throughout all Heaven. Your prayers are a beautiful sight and sound to the eyes and ears of our mighty God.

God is the most loving, merciful and powerful being in the universe. He is to be worshiped, thanked for his protection and many blessings and treated as a Holy Being. One of the ways we can tap into God's love, compassion and power is through prayer. Through prayer we can change God's mind as He sees that we are sincere in our request and that we have repented of our sins. As E. M. Bounds states in his book *E. M. Bounds on Prayer* “The earth is changed, revolutionized; angles move on the more powerful, more rapid wings; and God's policy is shaped when the prayers of His people are more numerous and more efficient.”

How to develop our prayer life is one of the

most important things we can set are hearts and minds to do. We must be able to gain God's attention and establish a relationship with Him that is similar to the relationship between a loving parent and a child. Bounds goes on to say, “The man/women who has done the most and the best praying is the most immortal, because prayers do not die. Perhaps the lips that uttered them are closed in death, or the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat, but the prayers live before God, and God's heart is set on them. Prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them – outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world.” (emphasis mine).

1. The first step in learning how to pray is to recognize that causal occasional prayer is not the way to God’s heart. We should not treat God in a perfunctory manner, out of a sense of obligation and/or because we have been told all of our lives that we should pray. But we must learn to wrestle with God and ourselves in our prayer life.

We must be earnest and sincere in our efforts. In other words, we should not let God go until the blessing comes. Read how Jacob wrestled with God until he was blessed in Genesis 32:24-30. *“Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. / When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. / Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.’” But he said, ‘ I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ / So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’” And he said, ‘Jacob.’ / He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.’ / Then Jacob asked him and said, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’” And he blessed him there. / So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, ‘I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.’”*

2. **The second step** is to pray without ceasing. If we have a serious problem or issue, or we are trying to help someone, we should not focus on the task at hand, or say to ourselves, ‘I have so much to do,’ but rather it would be better to spend our first hour(s) in prayer. Bounds quotes Martin Luther in his book; “When once asked what plans for the following day were, Martin Luther answered, ‘Work, work, from early until late. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.’”

2.1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17. _____

3. The **third step** in learning how to pray is to learn how to ask God for what we want. **If we ask not we receive not.** For example, let’s say that we are really tired during an airline trip and it would be great if we could get an upgrade into the first class cabin. But, we say to ourselves, ‘I know they won’t upgrade me,’ I guess I won’t even bother.



How many times have you talked yourselves out of a blessing by not asking? The same is true with God. Read Psalms 2:8-9. *“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession./You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.”*

3.1. I have heard many people say that “God will not answer my prayer.” They will go on to say; “I prayed for something once and God did not give it to me.” This is an extremely immature attitude. In most cases God is willing to give, the problem is that we are slow to ask. Read Isaiah 45:11-12. “Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: ‘Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands. /It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands And I ordained all their host.’”

3.2. Read James 4:2-3. _____

3.3. Lastly, we should pray with great faith. First, we must understand that God is all powerful; there is nothing He cannot do. Second, we must know and appreciate God’s love. As his children we must have faith that He wants to give us good and precious gifts. Read Mark 11:22-24. _____

4. The **fourth step** in developing our prayer life is that we must have an attitude of prayer. We must continue to look to God for help and direction. We have learned in previous lessons that as saved Christians, we are body, soul, and spirit. Our soul, which includes our emotions, mind, personality and will may be working against God. We have to learn how not to seek our wills, but the will of God. Our spirit, on the other hand, communes with the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit lives within us, He is teaching us to always look toward God rather than ourselves or other people. Prayer is the most natural way to look toward God for His direction. Having an attitude of prayer means that in every circumstance we should look first to God. Read Matthew 6:10.



4.1. Read Matthew 26: 38-39. *“Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.’ / And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”*

5. The fifth step is to recognize that God is all-powerful. There are no problems He cannot solve. We must understand the strength and power of prayer. St. Chrysostom in Bound’s books states, “The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire; it has bridled the rage of lions, hushed anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of heaven, assuaged diseases, repelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. Prayer is an all-efficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine that is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings.”

5.1. **As Christians we should want to live a holy life.** Our lives should be centered around God the Father, Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit our Teacher and Comforter. The first and most important need is for Christians to pray. Read Matthew 9:37-38.

5.2. **We must strive together in prayer.** Read Romans 15:30. “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”

6. The sixth step in learning how to pray is to be persistent in prayer. This is taught to us in Matthew when Jesus teaches us to “ask, seek and knock.” Read Matthew 7:7.



6.1. Read Luke 18:1-8 about the story of the woman who was persistent in her request.

7. **The seventh step** is to seek help from others (Intercessory Prayer). Lives have been changed and nations saved because of the prayers of God's people. Moses saved the nation of Israel by interceding on the people's behalf. Read Exodus 32:10-14. *"Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them and I will make of you a great nation. / Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, 'O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? /Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, "With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth"? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people./ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever."/ So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people."*

7.1. Job was asked by God to intercede for Job's friends. Read Job 42:8-10.

8. The eighth step in learning how to pray is to Pray in Secret. We should all have a special place where we pray alone. It is here that we should praise, talk with, wrestle and intercede for others in prayer. As we learned in the last lesson, the best time to do this is in the morning. It orders the day. Prepares us for the tasks and challenges of the day.

9. The ninth step is to remove hindrances to prayer. We need to remove all hindrances that may be keeping our prayers from being answered. Read 1 Peter 3:7



1.1. Read 1 John 3:21-22. *“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;/and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”*

1.2. Read James 4:2-3.

1.3. Read Psalm 66:18-20. *“If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; / But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer./ Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer Nor His loving kindness from me.”*

Summary. In the development of our relationships, whether they are with family members, friends, or colleagues, we gain knowledge of how to treat them, what we can say and cannot say and much about their feelings. In the development of our relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit the same is true. The more we pray the better the relationship. The more time we spend with God, the better the relationship.

When we are young spiritually, it seems that prayer is one way. It seems that we do all the talking and God does the listening. If it seems that way to you in your prayer life, think about this; a child has very little concept of who their parents really are, deep down inside. They simply think that mom and dad are there to provide for their needs. They do all of the asking and parents do all the listening and parents either give or don't give. As we mature spiritually, we begin to hear and understand God. In other words, God who is spirit communicates to us through our spirit. God speaks to our hearts.

Lastly, we will gain a much better understanding of God and His will for our lives through prayer. However, in listening to God and hearing his responses, we also gain a much better understanding of ourselves. We began to reflect Him. The more we pray the more we become like God.

During the week read/sing the following song as a reminder of this lesson.

Sweet Hour of Prayer - William W. Walford, William B. Bradbury

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from a world of care, and bids me at my Father's throne, make all my wants and wishes known. In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief, and oft escaped the tempter's snare by thy return sweet hour of prayer. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, thy wings shall my petition bear, to Him whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless. And since He bids me seek His face, believe His Word, and trust His grace, I'll cast on Him my every care, and wait for Thee, sweet hour of prayer.

