

“It came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples,’” Luke 11:1.

Dear Covenant Family of God,

As you have read our letters over the years, I trust that you have observed that I strive to be as transparent as possible in my thoughts and faith. Here comes another transparent point. We were raised in the church. We had Godly believing, faith filled, and teaching parents. Our family has seen the Hand of God move many times in small and also in mighty answers to prayers while faithfully standing on His Word.

I must confess that I thought that most Church-going Christians knew both the importance of, and how to pray. Yet, I know that none of us has the same background, teaching, experience, or heritage.

God has been dealing with me on this matter for quite some time and it finally came to a head a few months ago when I heard someone praying. It wasn't a bad prayer. Without being critical, it just wasn't a good prayer. God is the Judge but He began to remind me again about prayer and the growth steps of my prayer life.

Last year our children gave me a Father's Day gift of a most unusual nature. Instead of giving me a "thing" (and I really don't need another "thing"), they purchased a one-of-a-kind book for me from *Storyboard*. This book is unique because it contains many stories and experiences of my life. However, to read it, I first had to write it. They wanted me to write stories from my childhood, growing years, adult life, and my faith walk. The book was really a neat idea as I (just like you) have a lot of stories to tell. To help me along my journey of story telling, they supplied questions for me to answer, and then I was encouraged to wander off the beaten path in my thoughts.

One of those wandering thoughts took me to my prayer life and God began to show me how and when my prayers changed and grew. Even though I had been raised in a praying family, attended faith believing churches, and have always prayed, there was a lot of room for growth, and always will be. At one particular time of spiritual growth in my life, I was traveling full time, mostly by car. So I spent many hundreds of hours driving from coast to coast and border to border. The LORD led me to listen to Christian radio stations along the way and preaching tapes as I traveled. So, I would drive for hours either in prayer or listening to preachers. Most of the preaching was teaching me His Word. So many times God would

prick my ear to "hear" what was being said when I had become a "driving-zombie." God taught me to hear what was good (true) in their broadcasts, it may have been only one point out of 30 minutes of broadcast time, but it was a point of truth well worth remembering. Just as Will Roger's said, "I never met a man I didn't like," I must say that "I've never heard a preacher that I couldn't learn from." Now, truth be told, I may learn what not to do or say, as well as what to do, pray, and believe! I asked God to show me the difference. There are countless worthwhile ministers.

There have been a few times that I would change radio stations because I didn't care much for the radio evangelist. One time, I was headed to the office and such a preacher came on and I quickly changed stations. The Voice of God came to me quicker than I had changed the station and said, "**GO back to that station!**" "OK," I did, but did not really listen to the guy because I didn't like him. If I mentioned his name you would immediately know who I am talking about. After a few minutes, the LORD said, "**There, did you hear that?**" "Well, no, I really wasn't paying any attention," but God knew that. Then He said, "**Phillip, listen to what he is saying!**" Now God really had my attention, and I listened. The preacher repeated the same phrase over again, word for word. Did not see that coming. God said, "**There, did you hear that?**" "Yes, I did." "OK, now you can change stations," and I did. As I continued to drive, the LORD played this preacher's spiel again in my head and pointed out to me what was wrong. The preacher had quoted (combined) about four different Scriptures at one time into one single phrase, and they were all accurate in and of themselves. However, he had arranged these verses of God's Word to mean something **TOTALLY** different than what each verse was intended to mean either alone or in their original context. He used the Word of God to mean what he wanted it to mean for his own purpose, his own agenda, and that was to selfishly raise money for his own ministry. (There is nothing wrong with presenting yours needs, but it is wrong to twist the Word of God in an effort to get what you want.)

Without really realizing it, in the same way, God was teaching me how to pray and walk in His Word by listening to preachers, fellow men and women, that ministered His Word in Truth. Looking back now, I can see when and how my knowledge and faith grew in the LORD, espe-

cially concerning prayer. I didn't know everything about prayer (and still don't) just because of my family or church prayers. Oh, I did know some things, but there is always more to learn the more you seek God.

Are your prayers answered or do they hit the ground after leaving your lips? The trick to having your prayers answered, to living a fulfilled life, to staying under His Wing, and to walk in His Anointing, is to walk upright before the LORD, is to know His Word, is to listen and obey the Voice of His Holy Spirit **EVERY SINGLE HOUR OF EVERY SINGLE DAY!** Learning how to pray comes from listening to the SPIRIT when you read His Word and when you read or hear others preach, teach, or pray. You must ask God to teach you His Truth, He will! Just because you don't see the answer to your prayers doesn't mean that God did not hear or act upon your prayers. This is no time to get discouraged or lose your faith. No, we need to stand strong – especially – in the face of the enemy or what looks like defeat. We must be careful to not pray for our own selfish desires ahead of, or out of, the Will of His Word.

Looking back at our opening Scripture again, notice, if you will, that the verse starts out, ***“As He was praying in a certain place.”*** We don't know where they were. Neither do we know what (or who) Jesus was praying with or for, but He was praying. No doubt His disciples heard and noticed that He was always in prayer and that there were results when He prayed.

First off, what is prayer? Truthfully, I was disappointed when I looked for a good definition of the word “pray” or “praying.” I expected to read something like, ***“Petitioning God for a need,”*** or something like that. Instead, it read, ***“Address a solemn request or expression of thanks to a deity or other object of worship.”*** In my humble opinion, this is just an example of how far the world has gotten away from the LORD!

Praying is not:

- The repeating of 'magic' words by anyone to make something to occur;
- Wishful thinking;
- Begging, pleading, or trying to convince, or twisting the arm of God;
- Trying to convince God you are worthy of His Power and attention;
- Just 10 minutes of our day;
- Giving direction, order, command, promising to do something for God if He will do something for you, or giving an ultimatum to God;
- Just reciting words of someone else's prayer;
- Expecting God to move when you have sin in your life;
- Hoping God will move when you really don't think that He will.

My first understanding of a prayer was simply ***“talking***

SPECIAL NEEDS

You know the cost of food (and everything else) has increased and you see it's effect when you go shopping. Well, our prices for printing the Gospel of Jesus Christ increases at least 10% every year. Every thing that we buy or use costs more, from ink to postage, from paper to utilities. Since we do not sell Gospel Tracts, we can't just pass on the cost of printing. We depend upon you to help carry the burden of publishing His Word in Tract form. We send His Word without charge as God supplies for our needs. Please keep us in your prayers and prayerfully consider joining us with your monthly support.

to our Heavenly Father.” Now, that can take several forms or formats, praying for healing, protection, financial needs, the lost, salvation, national or personal needs, and so on. You can add to that – declaring – proclaiming – casting – praising - binding - loosening. Sometimes you are asking God to intervene in a situation for yourself or others, other times you are using the power given to the Body of Christ through the shed blood of Jesus Christ as a ***Soldier of the Cross.***

Let me stop here and say that because our God is Merciful, full of Grace and understanding, He will overlook many of our mistakes when we pray out of our ignorance or even our hurry. However, that is no reason to be sloppy or haphazard about our prayers. There is reason and order to the spiritual world and there should also be in our prayer lives. Yes, He knows what we need before we ask, and Yes, He knows what we mean when we pray. So what is the big deal?

John the Baptist taught his disciples how to pray, so there must have been a good reason. All of these men spent time in the Temple and had heard many leaders pray. But John knew that there was more to praying than just reciting rhetoric and felt that it was important enough to teach his disciples. Knowing that there was power in His prayers, Jesus was asked to likewise, teach His disciples how to pray. Jesus taught several things:

- ***When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly,*** **Matthew 6:6;**

- ***When you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking,*** **Matthew 6:7;**

- ***Do not be like them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him,***

Matthew 6:8;

- *When you pray, you shall not do what the hypocrites do: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward,*

Matthew 6:5;

- *In that day you shall ask of Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it unto you,*

John 16:23;

- *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,"*

Matthew 7:7;

- *Whatsoever you shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven,*

Matthew 18:18;

- *If two of you shall agree on Earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven,*

Matthew 18:19;

- *If you have faith, and doubt not, you shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if you shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea;' it shall be done,*

Matthew 21:21;

- *Pray therefore the LORD of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His Harvest,*

Matthew 9:38;

- *For every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,*

Luke 14:11;

- *Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man,*

Luke 21:36;

- *"Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,"*

Matthew 26:41;

- *"If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you,"*

John 15:7.

There are over 650 different prayers in the Bible for almost every need. You could read them, list them, recite them, and even memorize them, but what good would that do if you don't believe that God hears and answered YOUR prayers? Is there value in reading and even knowing how others prayed? Yes, we can learn how to pray, and what to believe for when we pray.

Is there power in prayer? Most certainly! It seems that Jesus was always in prayer, or at least a prayerful attitude. What did He pray for? He prayed for His disciples, He prayed for all believers, He prayed for His deliverance, and He prayed for those who persecuted and crucified Him. However, when it came to healing and delivering others, He didn't pray for them. He spoke the desired outcome to them, to the weather, to demons, and to satan. So there was Power in the Words that He spoke because He spoke the WORD! But then He said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do*

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EFFECTIVE PRAYER

From *Praying Hyde*

Mr. Hyde had a wonderful experience to which he owed, I believe, his power with God, and therefore with man. He used to speak of it as one of the most direct and solemn lessons God had ever taught him. He was up in the hills resting for a short time. He had been burdened about the spiritual condition of a certain pastor, and he resolved to spend time in definite intercession for him. Entering into his "inner chamber," he began pouring out his heart to his Heavenly Father concerning that brother somewhat as follows:

"O God! Thou knowest that brother, how—cold," he was going to say when suddenly a Hand seemed to be laid on his lips, and a Voice said to him in stern reproach, "He that toucheth the apple of Mine eye." A great horror came over him. He had been "judging" his brother. He felt rebuked and humbled before God. It was he himself who first needed putting right. He confessed his sin. He claimed the precious blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. *"Whatsoever things are lovely ... if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."* Then he cried out, "Father, show me what things are lovely and of good report in my brother's life." Like a flash he remembered how that brother had given up all for Christ, enduring persecution from relationships which he had given up. He was reminded of his years of hard work, of the tact with which he managed his difficult congregation, of the many quarrels he had healed, of what a model husband he was. One thing after another rose up before him and so all his prayer season was spent in praise for his brother instead of in prayer. He could not recall a single petition, nothing but thanksgiving! God was opening His servant's eyes to the highest of ministries, that of praise.

Mark the results also on that brother's life! When Mr. Hyde went down to the plains, he found that just then the brother had received a great spiritual uplift. While he was praising, God was blessing. A wonderful Divine Law is the law of a Father's love. While we bless God for any child of His, He delights to bless that one!

This was the secret of John Hyde's power with God; he saw the good in God's little ones, and so was able to appreciate God's work of Grace in that heart. Hence he supplied the Heavenly atmosphere of praise in which God's love was free to work in all its fullness. This, too, was what gave him power with men. We are attracted to those who appreciate us. All our powers expand in their presence, and we are with them at our best. Hence they call out all that is good in us, and we feel uplifted when with them. When we look at people's faults we shrivel up their energies; they are at their worst. In a word, we encourage their faults by thinking about them.

Let us remember above all else that God's people on this Earth are in the of growing when they

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yield themselves to the Holy Spirit. This is His workshop and souls are being fashioned and formed in it. The final polishing touches we will not receive in the present life but when this body of our humiliation has been transformed. Suppose you go into a carpenter's shop and begin to find fault with his unfinished chairs and tables. You say, "How rough this is! What an ugly corner that is!" The carpenter will doubtless get angry and say, "Bear in mind that I am still making these things. They are not yet finished. Come and see the pattern after which they are being fashioned. See, this is what they will be like when I am done with them." He shows you beautiful chairs and tables—shining, perfectly formed, polished to perfection! Is the carpenter not right? Is the critic not in the wrong? The one looks at the things which are lovely and eternal; the other at those which are unlovely and, thank God, fleeting.

How often Mr. Hyde excused men who had been unkind to him. "They do not understand," he said. "I know they do not want to be unkind," he once replied when he was asked to defend himself against a bitter and unjust attack. A friend even offered to write and explain, but he quietly said, "This is my cross which He wants me to take up and carry for Him."

What if we all had this spirit — misunderstandings, etc. would cease. Oh, the petty quarrels, jealousies, and misunderstandings among the dear children of God! How can they be done away with? I think that Mr. Hyde's way is sure to succeed. **BE MUCH IN PRAYER**; let any slight or even insult be an occasion to pray for the very persons who do these things, and praise God for the privilege of being permitted to bear these things. I think it was Madame Guyon who used to say when she was insulted or persecuted, "Thank you, Father, you saw I needed just this humbling."

But we need a life of prayer to be able to do this; not a spasmodic spurt, but a habit of prayer, to live in communion with Him.

The secret of Hyde's power with God and with men—*"Giving thanks in everything."*

This is God's command to those who would be full of the Holy Spirit, and no one I have ever known obeyed this command more faithfully than John Hyde. It was one great source of his joy and therefore of his attractive power. Again and again he would declare that if we want to know why trials are sent us, let us begin by thanking God in them, and we will doubtless soon see why they have been sent. We had among ourselves a phrase, "Praising God through shut teeth." That meant praising God in the face of the greatest troubles and darkest hours of life. This we can always do, for we can never doubt that He is our Father in Heaven, and so all must be well for us at all times and in all circumstances.

(Excerpted by F.A.Graw)

JESUS' INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER

Jesus said, 'After this manner therefore (you) pray: Our **Father** which art in Heaven, Holy is Your Name. (Your) Kingdom come. (Your) Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. (You) Give us this day our daily bread. And (You) forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And (You) lead us not into temptation, but (You) deliver us from evil: For (YOU are) the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen.' (Matthew 6:9-13) [Emphases added]

shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father," John 14:12.

Do we really believe that?

First, your prayers (mind, spirit, and words) **MUST** be aligned with the **WORD** of God! We must **humble** ourselves before God when we pray. We must believe, or have faith, that God **DOES** hear and **DOES** answer our prayers. And most importantly, we must **NOT** approach the Throne of the **LORD** in prayer with our petitions with unforgiven sin in our heart! I cannot emphasise that strongly enough. How do we expect God to answer our prayers when He can't look upon us because of our hardness of heart and sinful life?

The first step to answered prayers, for ourselves and for others, is to **humbly** come before our **LORD**.

- *If My people, which are called by My Name, shall **HUMBLE** themselves, and pray, and seek My Face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land,*

2 Chronicles 7:14;

- *He hath shown you ... to love mercy, and to walk **HUMBLY** with your God,*

Micah 6:8;

- ***HUMBLE** yourselves in the sight of the **LORD**, and He shall lift you up,*

James 4:10.

Our Heavenly Father loves us beyond our ability to comprehend. In that Love is His covenant to hear and answer our prayers! Ask Him to teach you His Truths concerning how to pray so that you can truly be His Vessel used for His service in a lost, hurting, and dying world.

Your Covenant Brother in Prayer,

Phillip Buttram

Phillip L Buttram

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