

## ***Thoughts on Intercession***

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In all the Christian experience, nothing is more fascinating than prayer.

Through prayer we have direct access to the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The very thought is extraordinary. And we get a person, not an answering service.

Through prayer we have the incredible privilege of influencing history and impacting eternity. When we pray, things happen that would not happen if we did not pray. Of course some will say, "But what about predestination? Wasn't everything planned by God before human history began?" Yes, but did you ever stop to consider that prayer was probably the main ingredient in the programming of human history? God knew whether we would pray even before the whole process began, and His answers were predestined into our lives. Human history is woven around the prayers of His people.

Through prayer we have the privilege of penetrating the veil that separates us from that mysterious, invisible world of darkness, where we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. The invisible world is just as real as the visible world, even though we are not presently equipped to see it. If God respects ungodly authority structures in the visible world, we can only suppose that He does the same in the invisible world. If there are obstacles in the visible world that require a great expenditure of effort, is it not also true in the invisible world?

### ***Why Pray?***

If there is anything indispensable for the Christian, it is prayer. Over and again in the Scriptures we are commanded to pray without ceasing (or without quitting). Take time to look up a few of the references: 1 Chronicles 16:11, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 55:17, Matthew 7:7-8, Luke 11: 5-8, 18:1:7, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:8, 5:5.

In view of these exhortations, we should need no further reason to make prayer the dominant activity of our lives. But though prayer is one of the great *mysteries* of the Christian experience, the Bible does give us some glimmers of light about its indispensable place in God's dealings with His creatures. And as we pursue these insights we gradually realize that in some way that is beyond our comprehension, God's intervention in our lives is limited by our willingness to invite Him. God respects our freedom. If we are content to try to be our own god, He allows us this independence. But He is pleased to reveal Himself and His power to those who make prayer their life principle.

Prayer is the means of infusing eternity into our lives. It is the means God has given us for rising from the kingdom of this world, which is in the hands of the enemy, and living in the kingdom of heaven. It is the means of transferring ownership for our lives, and all they touch, to our Lord and king. When we assume the role of god, we rule over a pitifully small kingdom. When we take our place in Christ at the right hand of God, we move our lives into His great plan.

## ***What happens when we pray?***

Prayer is infinitely more than saying words. When we pray in faith, believing, forces are set in motion that would stagger our imagination if God caused the scales to fall from our eyes.

### *1. When we pray, God hears.*

We can pray at any time, anywhere, under any circumstances. We can pray kneeling or standing, sitting or walking, eyes open or eyes closed. But every time we pray in faith, aware that God is there and that He is listening, God hears. Psalm 55:17

### *2. When we pray, God decrees His answers.*

Read a few of the many Scriptures promising answers to our prayers: Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 7:7, 18:19, 21:22, Mark 11:24, Luke 11:13, John 14:13, 15:17, 1 John 3:22, 5:14. (Perhaps you would like to copy these verses on cards to encourage you during the summer ministry.) When we pray, God decrees His answer. And the Word which He decrees will not return to Him without accomplishing its purpose. Isaiah 55:11

### *3. When we pray, God sends His angels as ministering spirits.*

God has many ways of answering our prayers. His angels are ministering spirits, sent to minister on behalf of those who are heirs of salvation. Hebrews 1:14 How many angels are without employment because Christians are not praying?

### *4. When we pray, God opens doors for ministry.*

Unless the Lord opens doors, our efforts are vain. When He is able to enter the doors of our churches (Revelation 3:20), He is able to open the doors of ministry (Revelation 3:8). And when He opens doors, no man can shut them. Prayer is our only means of opening doors. Colossians 4:2-4

We can pray for open doors without knowing what forces are keeping them closed. The doors to peoples' hearts are can be effectively shut by the world, the flesh or the devil--or by a combination of all three. Some Christians seem to be more preoccupied by the hidden forces of evil than by the power of the risen Savior. God, not the devil, must be the object of our attention.

### *5. When we pray, God fills His servants with courage.*

Prayer is the means by which we put on the whole armor of God. Paul asked for prayer so that whenever he opened his mouth, words would be given him so that he could fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel. Ephesians 6:19-20

### *6. When we pray, the Spirit brings conviction to sinners.*

The Holy Spirit fills His people with power--so necessary to confront the forces of evil. Acts 1:8 The One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4 The Spirit of God convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. John 16:8

## ***How to Pray***

You are about to embark on one of the most meaningful experiences of your life with God. Our main challenge will be to integrate prayer into every facet of our lives--something that many Christians have not learned to do. Prayer must not be compartmentalized and reserved only for special times. We must learn to live in the "third dimension." The first dimension is an awareness of self. The second, a genuine awareness of others. And the third dimension is an awareness of God.

We have the incredible privilege of being able to transform thought into prayer. We have the potential of producing spiritual energy. But the greatest energy waste of all often occurs right between our two ears.

As you join this team, no one can make you pray. Even during the times of group prayer, your mind will be able to wander. But on the other hand, no one can keep you from engaging in your high priestly ministry, no matter whatever else is going on. At any time, at any place, under any circumstances you can be on-line in God's intercession highway. You have unlimited time to surf God's global internet--starting right now.

Here are some tips on integrating prayer into your life.

### *1. The practice of the presence of Christ.*

Think of how you feel when you come home late at night to an empty house. But when you know someone is there, you can actually feel that person's presence. There is no greater comfort in the Christian life than the certainty of the abiding presence of Christ. It is a reality whether we feel it or not. And because it is a reality we can cultivate the sense of His presence. This is the prelude to worship and prayer. It is not psychological persuasion; it is reality.

### *2. Bowing down to worship Him.*

At any time, in any place, we can bow down to worship Him -- acknowledging His presence, submitting our lives to Him, and opening our hearts to His fullness. And He finds pleasure in our worship. Worship is the key ingredient in effective spiritual conflict, both in bringing spiritual fullness and in confounding the enemy.

### *3. Engaging in private prayer.*

Our facility to worship, our effectiveness in public praying, and our ability to maintain a sense of the abiding presence of Christ -- all these grow out of our time alone with God. As someone so aptly said, "We must seek Him in the morning if we'd have Him through the day." Though the days of our prayer venture in Europe will be full, and you will be tired, please determine before you go that you will maintain a time of "closet praying" on a daily basis.

### *4. Participation in group prayers.*

Group praying is powerful not only because of the increased number of intercessors, but because the Spirit can move a group into areas of prayer not always possible when we are alone. When Christians agree in prayer, power results. Group praying, however, is not merely bringing individual prayers together into the same place. It is sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit through the group. For this reason the most effective group praying is conversational -- short interconnected prayers rather than long monologues.

### *5. Prayer walking and prayer driving.*

Praying while walking is an extremely satisfying method of prayer. Because the body is in movement, the mind is more alert. The things we see while walking become objects of prayer, especially when we engage in prayer walking for particular places and people. Two people walking together make an effective prayer team, directing their comments to God in a spontaneous way. Remember that we can pray with our eyes open just as effectively as with our eyes closed.

Prayer driving makes maximum use of the time spent in vehicles. This can be spontaneous, without waiting for someone to say, "Let us pray." Conversational prayer in the car can go on for long periods of time without becoming fatiguing.

### *6. Spontaneous prayer.*

Because we can pray anywhere under any circumstances, we can integrate prayer into any circumstance -- conversations with a friend, reading prayer letters, being overtaken by anxious thoughts. In fact, transforming worries into prayer is effective not only in bringing peace of mind (Philippians 4:6), but of using these concerns as prayer reminders. We can pray while watching the news on TV, or reading a book. Seeing people can be prayer reminders. We can pray when prayer requests are being given as well as in the prayer time that follows.

### *7. Praying with others.*

Try cultivating a habit of praying with a person that you have a meaningful conversation with, especially if the person shares a particular need during the conversation. Praying with the unsaved is probably the most effective method we have of communicating God to them. When we pray with others we bring them into the holy place of our lives -- where God can touch their hearts.

## ***"Teach us to pray"***

When the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray He did not reply with a sermon or a series of lessons. He responded with a prayer. There is only one way to learn to pray -- it is to pray. Prayer is a skill that takes practice, just as is true of all other skills.

In the beginning of your experience, some forms of prayer will seem strange to you. And cultivating a God-consciousness will be a struggle at first. But if you are willing to persevere, "continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12), both you and others will feel the impact.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Ephesians 6:18