

# Do You Pray?

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the others."  
Chrysostom

## The Free Presbyterian Church in Cloverdale

Do you pray? It is a tough question that may embarrass even the Lord's people. Could you imagine going to an unsaved neighbour and asking this him, "Do you pray?" He would say it is none of your business. But in the church of the Lord Jesus it is our business.

Ever since the beginning of time there were two peoples in the world -those who prayed unto the Lord and those who rebelled against God. In the Old Testament prophecies regarding the gathering in of nations and Gentile peoples converts would call on the Lord's name. The spirit of prayer and supplication was to be poured out upon them.

In Acts chapter nine, Saul's surrender to the gospel was marked by the fact that he prayed. To assure Ananias that it was safe to speak with this former persecutor and murderer of Christians, the Lord said of Saul, "*Behold, he prayeth.*"

Prayer is the surest mark of a man's conversion to a life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ananias needed to know that Saul of Tarsus was really converted.

From this we learn that when people profess to be born again we may expect them to pray from the heart and become men or women of prayer. This is the best of all fruit in the convert's life. It is a powerful thing to change a man from a rebel to a submissive praying believer. So, our subject is a man or woman of prayer in the making.

## **THE DIFFICULTIES OF PRAYER**

While prayer is the norm for true converts of the Lord Jesus, yet it is often a struggle to maintain because of many hindrances.

We never read that Joshua's hand was weary with wielding the sword, but Moses' hand was weary with holding the rod. The more spiritual the duty, the more apt we are to tire of it. We could stand and preach all day; but we could not as easily pray all day. We could go forth to seek the sick all day, but we could not be in our closets all day as easily. To spend a night with God in prayer would be far more difficult than to spend a night with man in preaching. Oh! take care, take care, that thou dost not cease thy prayers!

**The first difficulty you will face may be lack of time.** It requires discipline to be a man or woman of prayer. You will need to have a set time to pray. Do not be bound by any one schedule, but you must take time with the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus practiced this habit of going apart with His disciples to pray.” “When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place *apart*: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities (Matt. 14:13).

“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain *apart* to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone” (Matt. 14:23).

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain *apart*...” (Matt. 17:1).

To pray effectively we need to get away from the chores of life and spend time with the Lord.

### **You may also face lack of peace and quiet**

It is vital to shut out the atmosphere of the world and get alone with the Lord. In prayer we talk to the Lord; in Bible reading the Lord talks with us. We need to open up all the issues of our hearts and that means putting our desires into words.

God left Elijah by the brook Cherith and He left Moses in the desert for forty years to make him a man of prayer. You too will need to find peace and quiet to exercise a genuine prayer ministry.

### **You will find it difficult to pray if you lack Bible study.**

We need to be guided by God's word if we would pray in the Lord's will. Neglect of the Bible is tantamount to saying you do not wish to hear from the Lord. If that is so, why should He hear from you? The Lord put it very clearly speaking through his prophet Zechariah, “Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 7:13).

Bible Study is the imperative of prayer. It is the key that unlocks the doorway into God's presence. It is the laver, or mirror, by which God will reveal your own condition that you may enter into His holy presence with confession of heart.

### **A lack of focus will hinder prayer.**

We must pray specific prayers. To lose focus on what you ask for is to lose power with God in prayer.

Our Lord Jesus said, “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23).

You are to pray specific requests through a specific Mediator as you ask in Jesus Name, and you are to have a specific purpose. When you get up from your knees after praying or go home from the prayer meeting you should be able to spell out the thing for which you prayed. Students under L.E. Maxwell were encouraged to keep a prayer journal.

### **Lack of purity will hinder prayer.**

Sin will hinder your praying. The Bible says so in so many ways and in so many places. Our sin nature within will try to take over. It is like weeds in the garden, when other plants in the garden are not growing vigorously, they multiply, and our sin nature will be aggressive and seek to dominate while we are prayerless.

“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Is. 59:1,2).

A vessel bound for Lisbon had a crew of eight men, two of whom were professors of religion. One of these two was active and earnest in his efforts to promote the spiritual good of his shipmates. The other, till near the end of the voyage, was not known as a Christian, and lived apparently as careless as any on board. After a while, it pleased God to bless the labours of the former by awakening the attention of three or four of the men to the concerns of eternity. Prayer meetings were held, morning and evening, in the fore-castle, which all the crew who could be spared were invited to attend. The conscience of the backslidden professor was crushed, and, having declared that he was a member of the Church, he offered to assist his more faithful brother in the devotional services. To this, objection was at once made by a young sailor, who said, "I cannot hear him pray for me. His life does not pray. Let him first repent of his unfaithfulness, and confess to God and his shipmates, and then we will hear him." The rebuke was felt, but produced anger rather than humiliation.

If we would have our prayers credited as sincere, our lives must be in agreement with our prayers. It is the fervent prayer of the righteous man that profits much (James 5:16). Our Lord is a prevalent intercessor, because He is "Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John 2:1). O how essential to usefulness is character!

## **HELPS TO PRAYER**

### **Study the prayer life of the Lord Jesus**

Although He was perfect and possessed all power in Himself, yet as He did the Father’s will on earth, He lived a life of dependence through praying to His heavenly Father.

**Study the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus at the Father’s right hand.** Read the book of Hebrews and note the places where you are exhorted to pray through the prayer ministry of the Lord (Heb. 4:14 -16).

### **Pray over the prayers of the Bible**

These might include the prayers of Moses. David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Daniel, Paul.

### **Pray through the Psalms**

Many of the Psalms are recorded prayers of men of God who cried out to the Lord in many circumstances. The Psalms often commence with problems and difficulties but end in victory through the power of prayer. By using the same words and applying the characteristics of prayer to our own hearts and needs you will soon learn to pray effectually.

### **Pray alone**

Our Lord Jesus prayed alone, so did Paul, and many other saints in the Bible. The closet is the secret place where you may be free to express your deepest heart's thoughts and desires without fear of seeking to impress men or of receiving their criticism.

### **Pray in the home**

Prayer as a family is a requirement to establish worship in the home and unite families in the faith of the Lord Jesus. Family prayer will make Christian homes a little church where God is invited to rule and bless all in the home.

### **Pray together**

The New Testament establishes the practice and records the powerful results of united praying. The church comes together to ask of God for needs and blessings which beset the church family. There are many blessings promised to such corporate praying. It is the life of the church and the true thermometer of the health of the church (Act 2, 4 12 etc.).

So, pray alone, then pray with your own family, and then pray with your church family. Those who pray best when alone and at home with the family will pray best in the house of God. Such will become examples in prayer and will carry the blessing to warm other hearts as well as reach the throne of God.

## **REWARDS OF PRAYER**

### **The man or woman of prayer will enjoy real communion with the Lord.**

To know the Lord and enjoy His fellowship is a blessing which money could not buy. This communion with the Lord is true spiritual satisfaction for which we were created and for which we have been saved by our Lord Jesus. He died to make us men and women of prayer. Have you ever felt the heart-burn which the Saviour gives while in prayer. If so you will not want it to end.

Too many professing Christians live as strangers to the Lord and if saved by grace they live as spiritual misers for they miss the most true riches of real Christian living.

**Only those who ask in believing prayer will find answers to prayer.** Very many believers fall into the category of James 4:2, "*ye have not because ye ask not.*" It is only when we ask in faith and confidence in the Saviour that we will find answers to prayer. That is why it is so important that you answer the question, "Do you pray?" If the answer is, "no" or if it is "not really," then there will be no reward because without asking you cannot receive. Think not that that man shall receive anything of the Lord.

### **Usefulness to God**

God will not use a prayerless soul to do His work. Paul was to be God's instrument to take the gospel to the Gentiles. He was to know the power of God in his own soul to be a shining light to the world. Thus he was placed in the school of prayer.

If you would be used of God, you too must begin to pray. It is not petty paper prayers that count with God, but to be a man or woman of prayer. It is to have the Spirit of the Lord living in you breathing the very spirit of prayer from your heart.

I'm quite sure if I asked you personally, "Do you wish to be used of God?" you would clearly reply, "Yes, I most certainly do." Then it is time to commence on the pathway of becoming a man or woman of prayer.

Take those steps that have been outlined in this short article. Do not hold back from what you know is imperative to a life of power with God and blessing to others.

Chrysostom said, "The man who can pray is truly richer and more blessed than all the others."

Lord Shaftesbury wore to the last day of his life a watch given to him by his nurse, who, when he was a child, taught him to pray. "This was given to me by the best friend I ever had in the world," he proudly said. What that single woman did for the world, though occupying but an unimportant position in it, simply by teaching the child under her charge to pray, it is impossible to estimate. If parents who occupy spheres where their duties hinder them from offering any other service to God only taught their children to pray, and led them in the pursuit of holiness, they would do that which would best promote the Kingdom of God in the world.

Do you really want to be useful to God? Then I ask, "Do You Pray?" Few enough are those who testify that they know these things, but fewer still actually do them. Resolve to be a man or woman of prayer. Seek this fruit in your life to have it announced, "Behold, he prayeth."