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# C.O.R.E

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Commit - Obey - Relationship - Encourage



Lesson Five:  
Prayer

## How important is prayer in my life?

Someone once said that a Christian is only as strong as his prayer life. There is a great deal of truth in this because prayer is simply your direct communication with God. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God. Your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ cannot grow without proper communication.

The purpose of this lesson is to acquaint the individual with the basics of proper prayer life so that these lines of communication can be open and effective in his life. If you have not done so already, at the onset of this lesson begin to keep a list of your prayer requests and answers to those prayers in your own "prayer book."

### **What Can Be Accomplished Through Prayer? (Philippians 4:6-7; James 5:16)**

Leonard Ravenhill wrote, "Poverty stricken as the Church is today in many things, she is most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, but few prayers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, but few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing her, we fail everywhere."

1. Prayer changes us (Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:7; Romans 8:26-28).
2. Through prayer we fight the spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:11-18; Luke 22:31-32; 1 Thessalonians 1:2).
3. Through prayer we acknowledge our submission to the will and way of God.

Prayer places the believer in an attitude of expectancy. The individual who does not pray tends to depend upon human invention, circumstances and expediency to make decisions. The praying Christian is "spiritually sensitized." "Coincidence" and "accident" are words foreign to his vocabulary (Ephesians 3:20-21).

4. Through prayer God demonstrates His presence and power in our daily lives (Hebrews 4:12-16).
5. Prayer serves as a spiritual watchdog against temptation (Mark 14:38; 2 Corinthians 13:7; 1 Corinthians 10:13). You are cognizant of the fact that there is a "way of escape" or grace to bear up under the trial.
6. Prayer is simply pleasing to God (Revelations 5:8; 8:3-4; Proverbs 15:8).

## What Are the Necessary Ingredients of Prayer? (Luke 11:1-13)

### 1. Worship, Adoration and Praise

More often than not our prayers are characterized by selfishness. The real objective of our prayers becomes our personal fulfillment and well being. If we worship God, we “must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We must recognize God for who He is. Primarily, we must worship Him in His holiness (Daniel 9:3-4; Isaiah 6:1-3).

### 2. Confession

In our own righteousness, none of us are worthy to approach the throne of God. Yet, because of our position in Christ, we have been instructed to boldly approach God in Hebrews 4:16. Although in Christ our sins have been purged, confession reminds us of God’s mercy and helps us to assume a humble posture before Him. See David’s prayer in Psalms 51 and Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:3-19.

Thomas Fuller wrote, “Man’s owning his weakness is the only stock for God theron to graft the grace of his acceptance.”

### 3. Restitution

Our willingness to make restitution where it is possible is the proof of genuine, sincere, repentant confession. Restitution also reaffirms our faith in God and His provision for our life. Zacchaeus, when faced with his sins of dishonesty, was so overwhelmed by the righteousness and holiness of Jesus that he covenanted to make restitution for his errors (Luke 19:8).

### 4. Thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 13:15)

Gurnall said, “Evil and Unthankful are twins that live and die together; as any one ceaseth to be evil, he begins to be thankful.”

### 5. Forgiveness (Matthew 6:12-15)

### 6. Unity (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

One of the marks of the early Church was unity (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

### 7. Faith (James 1:5-8)

These verses suggest, as does the whole book of James, that we show our faith by our works. “Asking in faith” does not mean that one must conjure up within himself a positive assurance that what he has asked for will take place if he believes hard enough. The text suggest we should have a single eye and that our walk should be consistent with our talk (James 2:18).

8. Petition (Matthew 7:7-8)

“Ask, seek and knock” suggest that we not only make our request known to God, but that we ought to be persistent in our prayer requests. Jesus illustrates this principle in Luke 11:8 where He said, “...Because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”

9. Submission: “Thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42)

D.L. Moody said, “I would a thousand times rather that God’s will should be done than my own. I cannot see into the future as God can; therefore, it is a good deal better to let Him choose for me than to choose for myself...when it comes to temporal matters... what I ask for may not be God’s purpose concerning me.”

C. H. Spurgeon said, “Faith has no design to have its own will, when that will is not in accordance with the mind of God; for such a desire would at bottom be the impulse of an unbelief which did not rely upon God’s judgment as our best guide. Faith knows that God’s will is the highest good...”

### **Some Questions About Prayer (Isaiah 65:24)**

D.L. Moody said, “The two first and essential means of grace are the Word of God and prayer. By these come conversion; for we are born again by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever; and whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

By these also we grow; for we are exhorted to desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2), and we cannot grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) except we also speak to Him in prayer.

It is by the Word that the Father sanctifies us; but we are also bidden to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation (Matthew 26:41).

These two means of grace must be used in their right proportion. If we read the Word and do not pray, we may become puffed up with knowledge, without the love that buildeth up. If we pray without reading the Word, we shall be ignorant of the mind and will of God, and become mystical and fanatical, and liable to be blown about by every wind of doctrine.”

E. M. Bounds said, “Prayer is the contact of a living soul with God. In prayer, God stoops to kiss man, to bless man and to aid in everything that God can devise or man can need.”

1. Where are we to pray?
  - A. Everywhere (1 Timothy 2:8)
  - B. In the closet (Matthew 6:6)
  - C. In the temple (Luke 18:10; Acts 3; Psalms 26:12; 1 Kings 8:22-53)
  
2. When are we to pray?
  - A. Always (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
  - B. In the morning (Psalms 5:3)
  - C. At noon and in the evening (Psalms 55:17)
  - D. Daily (Psalms 86:3; Daniel 6:10)
  - E. Day and Night (Psalms 88:1)
  
3. What are some things for which we ought to pray?
  - A. Pray for the return of Christ, the will of God to be done, daily provisions, forgiveness, guidance, victory over temptation and sin (Matthew 6:9-13).
  - B. Pray for the sick and informed (James 5:13-16).
  - C. Pray for all men, for all in authority, for the salvation of the lost (1 Timothy 2:1-4).
  - D. Pray for a long life (Isaiah 38:1-5).
  - E. Pray for personal safety and the safety of others (Daniel 6:18-23).
  - F. Pray for wisdom, knowledge and understanding (2 Chronicles 1:7-12; 1 Kings 3:5-9).
  - G. Pray for a prosperous journey (Romans 1:10).
  - H. Pray for the spiritual maturity of Christian brethren (Colossians 1:28).
  - I. Pray for those over you in your local church (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17-18).

Charles Spurgeon said, "To seek aid in time of distress from a supernatural Being is an instinct of human nature. I believe in the truthfulness of this instinct, and that man prays because there is something in prayer. As when the Creator gives His creature the power of thirst, it is because water exists to meet its thirst; and as when He creates hunger there is food to correspond to the appetite; so when He inclines men to pray, it is because prayer has a corresponding blessing connected with it."

## Why Doesn't God Always Answer Our Prayers? (1 Samuel 14:37-38)

The paint can label reads, "Clean surface thoroughly. Remove dirt, grease, wax and oil. Scrape off any loose paint. Patch and prime large cracks. Do not apply if temperature is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit." What would happen if you violated the instructions so clearly stated on the can of paint? Any painter, amateur or professional, who has at one time or another violated these instructions, knows perfectly well what will probably happen. You'll have one big mess on your hands! So it is with prayer.

Why is it that God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we would like Him to?

1. God does not answer our prayers when we willingly violate His direct will and commandments.  
Our sin keeps God from answering our prayers (1 John 3:22; Psalms 66:18; John 9:31; Isaiah 59:2; Proverbs 28:9; 1 Peter 3:12).
2. God does not answer our prayers when our requests contradict His intended means of chastisement in our lives.  
In the case of David, God could have spared the life of the child, but He determined that it would be more beneficial for David if the chastisement was complete (2 Samuel 12:16). By the way, God can change His mind s He did in the case of Ninevah (Jonah 3:10).
3. God does not answer prayer when one prays to the wrong god (1 Kings 18:26; Acts 17:22-31).
4. God does not always answer prayer immediately.  
In Nehemiah 1:1-11 and 2:1-6, four months pass between request and answer. Our timing is not always God's timing, and He teaches us faith and patience in just such circumstances where we must wait upon Him. Time is not nearly as important to God as it is to us. God's "delays" are well thought out.
5. God does not answer our prayers when we have improper interpersonal relationships.
  - A. Husband and wife (1 Peter 3:7)
  - B. Holding personal grudges (Ephesians 4:26; Mark 11:25-26; James 5:9).
  - C. Imagining evil against others (Zechariah 7:9-13)
6. God does not answer prayer when prayer is pretense (Matthew 23:14). Insincere prayer is fruitless and worthless. It can even become sin (Psalms 109:7).
  - A. Fruit bearing is a prerequisite to answered prayer (John 15:16).
  - B. All talk, no action is pretense (Ecclesiastes 5:3).
  - C. Repetitious prayers are a pretense (Matthew 6:7).

7. God does not answer prayer when it is used strictly for selfish reasons (James 4:3).
8. God does not answer prayer when He chooses not to answer. Sometimes the answer is “no.” God does not act without purpose (2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Matthew 26:39, 42,44; 1 John 5:14-15; Romans 8:27).
9. God does not answer prayer when we will not, in humility, assume our proper place before Him (Luke 18:10-14).

### **Prayer and Meditation (Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:1-2)**

1. The biblical practice of meditation goes back to the book of Genesis where the word is first used. Isaac, at eventide, went out into the field to meditate. It was on this occasion that he met his wife Rebekah (Genesis 24:63-64).

Webster defines the verb “to meditate” accordingly:

1. To contemplate; to keep the mind fixed upon; to study
  2. To purpose; to intend; to design; to plan by revolving the mind
  3. Synonyms are: consider, ponder, weigh or study
2. Biblically, meditation is associated with prayer (Psalms 5:1); singing praises to the Lord (Psalms 104:33-34); witnessing and testifying for the Lord (Psalms 77:12); the Word of God (Psalms 119:15, 23, 48, 78,97, 99, 148). Meditation is to be done with understanding (Psalms 49:3), and is to be acceptable unto the Lord (Psalms 19:14).

What are some of the hindrances we face in prayer and meditation?

1. Spiritual opposition
  2. Over scheduling
  3. Failure to designate a quiet time and place
  4. Imagination burn out
  5. Failure to recognize its importance to our peace of mind and spiritual well being
  6. Laziness
3. One of the synonyms for “to meditate” under Webster’s definition was “to consider.”

Our King James Bible lists numerous things we are to meditate upon or consider:

1. Consider the wondrous works of God (Isaiah 5:12; Job 37:14; Psalms 8:3; 143:5; Ecclesiastes 7:13).
2. Consider how great things God hath done for you (1 Samuel 12:24; Psalms 64:9; Matthew 6:28; Luke 12:24, 27; Deuteronomy 4:39).
3. Consider your ways (Haggai 1:5, 7; Deuteronomy 8:5).
4. Consider the fruit of slothfulness and laziness (Proverbs 6:6; 24:30-32).
5. Consider the end of the wicked (Proverbs 21:12)
6. Consider Him (Hebrews 3:1; 12:3).

## **Prayer and Fasting (Mark 9:29)**

1. The biblical practice of fasting is seen throughout the Scriptures. Unfortunately, it is something often overlooked in Christianity today.
2. To fast is to abstain from food voluntarily for a particular time. The idea is to deny your flesh and show God how serious you are about your prayer.

In the Bible, we see different reasons people fasted with their prayers.

1. David for his child's healing (2 Samuel 12:15-23)
  2. Jehoshaphat for victory over his enemies (2 Chronicles 20:1-12)
  3. Ezra for God's direction and protection (Ezra 8:21-23)
  4. Nehemiah for the remnant of Israel (Nehemiah 1:1-11)
  5. Israel for their sin (Isaiah 58:6)
  6. Jesus for spiritual strength and preparation (Matthew 4:1-2)
  7. Church prophets and teachers for missionaries (Acts 13:1-3)
  8. Paul and Barnabas for ordaining church elders (Acts 14:23)
  9. Paul and his shipmates for safety (Acts 27:33)
  10. Jesus for serious spiritual problems of others (Mark 9:25-29)
3. Prayer with fasting is still beneficial for us today and will move the hand of God on our behalf.

## **Why Is Prayer the True Mark of Spirituality? (Acts 4:31)**

There are many spiritual exercises in which every true born again, blood bought, child of God ought to be involved. Bible reading, soul winning, Christian service and ministry all designate or mark the zealous, responsible Christian individual. Yet, important as each of these are, none can be properly motivated or empowered without prayer. D. L. Moody declared, "Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure." One writer stated, "The only footprints in the sands of time that will be kept are the ones made after the knee prints."

With Acts 4:31 as our example, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness," we see that prayer is the true mark of spirituality as follows:

1. Through prayer we lay hold of spiritual power - "...place was shaken..."
  - A. Prayer gives us power against sin and brings forth acknowledgement, humiliation, confession, repentance, cleansing and spiritual sensitivity.
  - B. Prayer gives us power against "backsliding" with reaffirmation of commitment and purpose, godly communication and laying hold of God's resources.
  - C. "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of God's willingness."



- D. Prayer gives us power against slackening of service, it lightens the duties and responsibilities of Christian service. "Prayer is the spiritual lubricant that makes the machinery run smoothly and efficiently."
2. Through prayer spiritual life is increased and enhanced - "...they were all filled..."
    - A. Prayer is the means by which one maintains and expresses a right attitude toward God - gratitude, thanksgiving, submission, trust, dependence, worship.
    - B. Prayer leads to constant God-consciousness - Christ in you, the temple of the Holy Ghost.
    - C. Prayer makes clear the will of God - through word, circumstance, assurance and balance, perception of the soul are clarified, determinations of the will are strengthened.
  3. Through prayer we are motivated to do the work of Christ - "...they spake the word of God with boldness."
    - A. George Mueller said, "The most important part of prayer is the 15 minutes that follow it."
    - B. Martin Luther said, "I am so busy now that I find if I did not spend two or three hours each day in prayer, I could not get through the day."
    - C. Prayer brings power, authority and credibility to our work.
    - D. Prayer makes the Word of God real to us, it unlocks the promises and blessings of God.
    - E. Prayer sensitizes us to the heartbeat of God - souls, evangelism, missions and the needs of others. It proves our sincerity of purpose.
    - F. Prayer teaches us that man's extremities are God's opportunities.
    - G. Prayer is the slender nerve that activates the muscle of the omnipotence of God.

# Questions & Answers

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1. List six things that can be accomplished through prayer.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.

2. List the nine necessary ingredients of prayer.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.
- G.
- H.
- I.

3. Where are we to pray?

4. When are we to pray?

5. What are some things for which we ought to pray?
  
6. List five reasons why God may not answer our prayers.
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
  - E.
  
7. Upon what should one meditate in prayer?
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
  - E.
  - F.
  
8. Name three people in the Bible who fasted and why?
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  
9. Why is prayer the true mark of spirituality?
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  
10. Briefly explain the primary purpose of this lesson.

# Key Memory Verses

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*“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understand, shall keep your hearts and minds though Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).*

*“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalms 66:18).*

*“And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29).*

# *Additional Thoughts*

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**In many churches today, some popular teachings on prayer are:**

1. Man should pray to idols, saints or other men.
2. If you pray long enough or hard enough, God will change His mind and do what you want.
3. The best prayers are those which have been written by others and are just “said” by you.
4. Prayer must be at a set time in a set format.

From the Bible principles taught in this lesson, you should understand that these teachings are false, and why.

# Questions

Write any questions you may have concerning the subjects of this lesson.

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