

Peter Lord's
The Leader's Prayer Life
by
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Our quality of life is connected with our prayer life. "It is a lot easier to preach about prayer than it is to pray." In the Bible, the only thing the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them is to pray.' "**We set a time for everything that is important in our life.** If prayer is important to us, then we will not leave it up for grabs. We are people who live by habits and routines. Habits are not always bad. You can get them going for you well. Use a habit for yourself. One of the goals that I am after today is to **set a significant time in your life that you will give to God alone...** There are more examples of prayer and things about prayer in the Bible than any other one subject."

Prayer life of the Early Church

The early church considered prayer to be an important part of their life. The book of **Acts** is a historical account of the early church. "These all with one mind were **continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (**Acts 1:14**). When a decision needed to be made, **they prayed (1:24)**. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**" (**2:42**). The best way for Peter and John to get wisdom for dealing with the 3000 saved souls was to pray (**3:1**). "When **they had prayed**, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (**4:31**). Deacons were brought in so that the pastors could **devote themselves to prayer** and not be distracted (**6:4**). Ananias got a revelation (possibly during prayer time) to go to Saul who was **praying (9:11)**. Peter **prayed (10:9)**. "Peter was kept in the prison, but **prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God**" (**12:5**). Paul looked for a **place of prayer** at Philippi (**16:12,13,16**). "Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns of praise to God**," while they were in prison and then a great earthquake happened (**16:26**).

Prayer Life of Paul

"To me, there is nothing that emphasizes the importance of prayer than the fact of this: Paul starts almost every letter that he writes by saying to the people, 'I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you fervently, and I'm praying for you regularly.' Either Paul was a big liar, or he had a long prayer list."

Rom. 1:10 says, "always in **my prayers** making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you." In **1 Cor. 1:4**, Paul does not use the word 'prayer', but he thanks God always concerning them, which is prayer. **2 Cor 1:11** shows Paul's emphasis on prayer. Paul gets directly into the issues in the letter to the Galatians since the problems were so bad. In **Eph. 1:16**, I "do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my **prayers**." **Eph. 3:14-22** is a prayer we can pray also. In **Phil. 1:3-4**, Paul is "always offering **prayer**" for them. **Phil. 1:9-11** tells what Paul is specifically praying for.

Col 1:3 says he is "praying always for you." **Col. 1:9-12** tells specifically what Paul prayed. We must be specific in our prayers, otherwise it is a weak prayer. A son does not just say to his father, "bless me." Instead he might say, "bless me with ten dollars."

1 Thess. 1:2 says, "we give thanks to God always for all of you making mention of you in our prayers." **2 Thess. 1:11** similarly says, "we pray for you always." Paul is writing to Timothy to tell him how to "fight the good fight" (**1 Tim. 1:18**). Paul, addressing this says, "first of all, then I urge that entreaties and prayers be made" (**1 Tim. 2:1**). In **2 Tim 1:3**, Paul prayed night and day for Timothy. **Philemon 4** says, "I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers."

Two points can be obtained from noticing that the beginning of most of Paul's letters mention that he is praying for them. First, prayer must have been a very important part of his life and thinking. Second, it shows the great extent of the apostle Paul's prayer life.

Similarly, prayer should have a key part in our life, and we should pray for people, such as our disciples. If a person wants us to pray for them, then we should not say 'yes' unless we are really going to pray for them. It is easy to accidentally lie or forget to pray for people.

Most of the praying in the New Testament is for people who are doing well, not for people who have gone bad. In many prayer meetings, there may be a tendency to be "crisis centered. Ninety percent of our prayers are for some physical or material calamities... If we pray for people when they're good, then they might not go bad."

Religious Bug-a-boos about Prayer

Before praying, "we are going to have to get rid of some religious bug-a-boos that we have in our minds... God hears our prayers as much as Oral Roberts [or some other respected man of God]...

God only requires two or three people to agree on any one thing to have all the power you can have before Him... [We must not be under the Corinth theology:] That the way to get something done in heaven is like the way you get something done in Washington: You get a lot of people who have an influence with the in-guy to twist his arm backwards. The only reason you ought to call over three people for any prayer request is if the Holy Spirit tells you to do it specifically. It's almost a trend in Christianity: It depends on the seriousness of the crisis how much money we spend in making long distance phone calls to get people to do it and how many people we call. These sorts of religious bug-a-boos we need to get out of our mind. New Testament theology says this: That the least unto the greatest of them can know the Lord. That means everybody has an 'in' with God. Do you really believe that? **Do you believe that you and your wife can call down God in any situation as much as Oral Roberts and Billy Graham praying together in unison?"**

"Have you noticed in **Ephesians 6** when it tells you to put on the armor, what the next thing to do is not to go visiting... After you get on the armor, where do you go? You go to the prayer closet... **The armor is to go into the prayer closet...** You read **Ephesians 6**, after you get on the armor, then the next thing it commands you to do is to pray, not to go visiting or preaching, but to go pray."

Attentiveness in Prayer

"If God wants you to be a part of the answer to a prayer then He will tell you. Sometimes God will not have us do anything except trust Him to bring about the fulfillment of our prayer. **James 1:5** says, "if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God." We need to be able to hear from God as to what we ought to do.

We can divide our praying into **devotional** praying and **intercessory** praying. **Intercession** is warfare prayer. It is when the object of our prayer is someone that is not related to us. **Devotional** prayer is having fellowship with the Lord and doing lots of listening to the Lord.

Our prayers can be based on two facts. First, **we have the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16)**. Second, **we have the Holy Spirit who will speak the expressed will of God through the mind of Christ**. We have the same kind of mind that Christ had, and "the mind that Christ had He could hear everything that the Father was saying. You see, God didn't give Him an all layed out plan. He'd look up to heaven to find out what the Father was doing."

Practical Aspects of Praying

First, you need a **regular place to pray alone**. When someone else is in the room, there is a difference to your prayers. Second, you need to **set a definite time, in the morning**. "Did you know that you can't pray the Lord's prayer at night. After you've had three square meals and about five snacks and you say 'give me this day my daily bread.' "I believe the morning is the best time. Let me tell you how to do it. **It's easy to get up early in the morning: You go to bed early at night...** It takes about six weeks to make a physical adjustment." We need to discipline ourselves and get to bed early. "I determine my going to bed time by my getting up time because I know what I need physically at my age. And I'm not going to presume on staying up till 12 o'clock and the Holy Ghost waking me up every morning and keeping me awake while I'm going through devotion in a half foggy mind." The Scriptures support the importance of praying in the morning: **Ps. 57:8, Ps. 59:16, Ps. 143:8**. "I shall joyfully sing of Thy loving kindness **in the morning**" (**Ps. 59:16**).

Third, we could **mix our praying with Bible study**. We can "read a little, pray a little, read a little, pray a little. Variety is a very good thing." Fourth, we should **bring a notebook and pen into prayer**. Our prayer list will remind us of who and what to pray for, and we can record what God is speaking to us. "The finest ink is better than the strongest memory."

Fifth, "**let your gaze be on God and your glance on your request**. Most of the time we're gazing on the request and telling God what to do. God looks down and sees the things that really is. And if you will look at God, He'll interpret the mess you see out here... And He will tell you how to pray." Sixth, "**let prayer be your first choice and not your last chance**. Get in the habit and teach your people to get into the habit of going to God immediately in everything. 'God, the baby is sick. Do you want me to spend your money and time down at the doctor's office? If You do, fine. If You don't want me to, then tell me what to do.' And you get your instructions from the Lord."

Seventh, "**pray out of conviction rather than out of crisis**." We should not wait until a problem comes before we pray. Eighth, "**pray retail and not whole sale**. Let me give you an illustration of whole sale praying: 'Lord you're the greatest in all the world. Thank you for everything. Forgive all my sins. Bless everybody, and give me all I want.' Now, what have you left out? Praying retail would be like this: 'Lord, I'm praying for Susan and You know she is having a very very hard time with that neighbor, and I'm asking You to show her how to reach that neighbor for you.' And you know when the answer comes. Ninth, **use a lot of praise and thanksgiving in your praying**.

Keeping Your Mind on Your Subject

"Over the years, the biggest problem that sincere people have had with praying is **how do you keep your mind on your subject?** And as I have gathered from the people who I know who

have been good prayers, there are two things they use: One is either to **say their prayers out loud**, or the other is to **write them out**. I have opted to write my prayers out. Most of the days I write God a letter for the first part of my prayer. Literally, I write God a letter. I start out 'Dear Father' and so forth. Then of course, I use my prayer book in the writing out of my prayers and the listening to the response that God gives me. People have found that either praying out loud (and I just can't get used to that and it's just not my way of doing it), but to pray out loud or to write out your prayers (to use some form of writing) has been the best way to keep attention.

"Feelings have nothing to do with the validity of praying. I don't know about you, the times I need to pray the most I least feel like it." When we don't feel like praying but we go ahead and do it anyway as a sacrifice, God may appreciate it more. Praying 'in the Spirit' is absolutely essential. There is virtue and value in giving good quality time to God in prayer, even if it seems legalistic.