

PRAYER—A BLESSING FROM GOD

By: Bill Richardson Edited by: Bill Kelly

I have given much thought, and yes prayer also, as how to get started in this study writing on the chosen subject, prayer. It could be said that there are different methods or techniques in beginning writing a speech, or teaching a class. Back in time I heard the 'pros say that one should develop an interesting introduction so as to get the reader or listener's attention. I have been thinking, "Am I supposed to be telling you this?" Isn't one's technique supposed to stand on its own merit?

I've experienced several methods which were used by some class teachers and or guest speakers that told a cute little story or a proper joke. You know...like a preacher's joke! However, the subject of prayer caused me to ask myself the question, "Do I start a study on prayer by telling a story or a joke? As for me, and being born in the era which preceded the great depression, by seven years, I could tell a cute, but appropriate joke/story on prayer. I'm not going to tell either one in this writing. Instead I am going to trust that I have gotten your attention. I ask however, do I have your attention? I'll tell you this, I would tell you either one or both sometime if you want to stop me in the hallway and ask. How's that? But I'd rather talk about prayer!

Prayer...what a beautiful blessing! What a need of the Saints. Yes, and what a need of God from the Saints. Why study and or write about it? One might ask. Well, it came to me in thought about when I began this study on prayer, as a subject. Now I want to tell you a truth which is the result of my thinking.

I thought, prayed, read in the Bible of prayers, and researched Cruden's Concordance and a Bible Encyclopedia for two days. Then I answered my heart's question and concluded: I have to research, study and written about prayer, and I have to pass it on. It was a dictate of my heart to learn more in that I realized communion with God the Father by prayer was, as I said above, a beautiful blessing which is given to us by God. I need to know all I can learn of and about prayer. I need to grow in love and service with Him and He will walk with me all the way.

As it turned out, not only was it a blessing, but a challenge and a reward of a heart full of joy. Oh there's joy...joy...joy down deep in my heart. Oh, I pray that you will receive and have a joyful reward of heart as you study this lesson with me. God bless us all! Do I now have your attention? I love you and I do hope you feel a need to study prayer and to grow in love for God our Creator.

Let's continue the study by asking, "What is prayer?" Do you think it strange to ask that question? I submit to you that in order for us to answer we must know prayer. I also submit to you that there is more to it than just saying, prayer is talking to God. I am using my technique, if you can all it that, to lead us into the great depth of knowledge and wisdom required of us in analyzing and studying so as to know the term" know(ing) prayer.

Interesting to me, in my study and searching for the depths of knowing prayer is the account of Luke 11:1. It tells us that Jesus had been praying in a certain place. When He ceased praying one of His disciples said to Him, "*Lord teach us to pray...*" We can conclude that to learn and know prayer we must be taught. After Jesus gave His disciples the model prayer He continued to teach them by encouraging them to keep praying (cf. Luke 11:9-10).

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Here are some defining expressions which can help us to know prayer. Please know that prayer is commanded and is to be offered to God through Jesus Christ. Note what the scriptures reveal to us in Isaiah 55:6, it says, "*Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.*" We are given this admonishment in Philippians, "*Be anxious (apprehensive) for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication (plea) with thanksgiving, let your request be made*

known to God... “Hearken (dear attentively) unto the voice of my cry my King and my God; for unto thee will I pray (Psalms 5:2). Aught we to pray “boldly”? Please read on.

Now let's select and arrange proper (suitable) words to define prayer. It can be said that prayer is – earnest petition, entreaty (beseech, implore, plead) or thanksgiving unto God. Three things are addressed here which are used and explained in 1 Timothy 2:1). In the exhortation of the cited scripture three expressions are used:

- Supplication: Request for personal needs.
- Intercession: Praying for the needs of others.
- Thanksgiving: Gratitude for divine mercy and His blessings.

In our explaining or defining prayer it can be said, “The characteristics or a mark of prayer is that it is an activity of the Christian. It is a communication between man and God. God allows us to approach Him in prayer. God shows His great love for us and in prayer we formulate and manifest our denotation to Him.

It can be said that prayer is unique...conformably to rule, consistent with God's law, might I say. Prayer consists' of who, what, how and why. These points will be covered as we go down the list of the integral parts of prayer. One of the definitions of unique is, “one of a kind”. That's understandable and there is no issue with that as far as I know. Our prayers, though there may be many are truly unique. We pray to the God of Heaven. To the Spirit and to Christ which by the Holy Spirit is one and thus unique. You're LORD your God is one (cf. Mark 12:29; Deut. 6:4; Isaiah 44:8, 45:5, 46:9; 1 Cor.8:6). And there are other scriptures which tell us there is one God.

In Matthew 4:10, Jesus is teaching by warning Israel against falling into idolatry when He said, “*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve*” (cf. Psalms 5:2; Deut. 6:13, 10:20; Joshua 24:14). “*For through Him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit to the Father*” (Ephesians 2:18). God has through Christ given a blessing, by boldness, to enter God's presence. We have access to God in prayer through Christ our living Lord. Christ Jesus is the propitiation in that His sacrificial death paid the penalty for our sin. We do sin! In order that our sins to be forgiven we must confess our sins, be repentant and beg forgiveness by praying to God through Christ. Let us praise the Lord because through the propitiative nature of Christ and the love and grace of God we are restored to the right relationship with God.

When we pray humbly and in sincerity we are forgiven. Our relationship is restored with God and our hearts are made to rejoice. Why? Because we know from the promise of God, by His word, God hears and God answers our prayers. God appeared to Solomon, (the second time), and the LORD said to him, “*I heard your prayer and your supplications you made before Me...*” God hears the prayers and supplications of His servants (Daniel 9:17). Christ prayed, in the days of His flesh, and was heard (Matthew 5:7). Jesus again prayed and was heard (Hebrews 6:39). Isaiah 58:9 says, “*Then you shall call and the LORD will answer...*” Here are more scriptures that will be of great benefit to look at and ponder, please do (Psalms 50:15, 91:15, 99:6; Job 13:22; Matthew 6:5-8; John 15:7, 9:31; Colossians 4:2; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:8).

Prayers are granted by the grace of God and acceptable through Christ. Christ blessed us with His words in John 14:13 by saying, “*Whatever you ask in My name that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*” The mutual exaltation of Father and Son would be accomplished through Jesus' suffering death and resurrection. Read John 13:32! There is fruit produced through prayer. Jesus said, “*...ask in my name, and you will receive, that your Joy may be full*” (John 16:24).

Christ is our High Priest and because He is, we must draw near to God with full assurance. Hebrews 10:21-22 tells us “*...having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...*”

Prayers must be offered in a forgiving spirit. *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”* (Matthew 6:14). Thus forgiveness is required of us. And whenever we pray if we have anything against anyone, forgive him that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. We are told this in (Mark 11:15. See also Matthew 7:2; Mark 4:24; and Luke 6:38). Those are powerful preparations needed of one before you pray. Actually they are things which we have to live every day of our responsible Christlike lives.

Prayers must be offered with the heart, my ‘O my! And that is with the whole heart. Please read and note what is said in Jeremiah 29:13. Thus says the LORD. *“And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”* Lamentations 3:41 says, *“I cry out my whole heart; Hear me, O LORD! I will keep Your statutes.”*

Prayers must be offered with preparation of heart. Should we do anything for God without preparing? Preparing...isn't that like getting ready? I think so. In 2 Chronicles 30:19 hear the words of Hezekiah's prayer by reading these words aloud, *“May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone who prepared to seek God...”* Such admonishment is again cited in 2 Chronicles 19:3 in these words, *“Prepare your heart to seek God.”* 1 Samuel 7:3 says to...*prepare your heart for the LORD...* Now, do we realize more fully that we do in fact need to be taught how to pray, and that preparation is very necessary? Can we now see also that there are different parts of this old tabernacle needs to be straitened up and cleaned up more, and more often. Read on!

Preparing one's heart is to repent and receive forgiveness of one's wickedness. Look up the synonyms of wickedness. Acceptable prayers must come from a clean heart. I'm sure that you know that we are made clean through the word which Jesus spoke in John 15:3. Jesus said it just a little-bit different. He said, *“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”* That says to us, *“We-must-do-it-right.”* If we do...it is acceptable to God. Yes we have been told, thus we must learn how to do it right!

Consider Psalms24:3-5. *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul into vanity, nor sworn deceitful. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of His salvation.”*

Prayer must be offered with spirit and “truth” (understanding is used for truth in the NKJV). Let's begin thinking of this by saying that the substance of prayer is vital to the prayer. If prayer is offered to God Almighty through Jesus Christ our Lord, do we realize what all is required of us if our prayer is offered with spirit and truth? I submit that it is a mind set, that is, understanding is required...we must know! We must know how and what to say when we request audience and prayer with God our creator. Knowing how and what to say in our prayers are more powerful and a greater need than I first realized. No, I was not reluctant to say earlier in this study that we need to be taught how to pray. We know this to be true. We know that it is in God's word. And yes, we must walk by His word in doing His will.

In consideration of prayers offered in spirit and in truth, (understanding), as cited in John 4:22-24 and 1 Corinthians 14:15, we need to define the meaning of spirit. This spirit with a small or lower case “s” is the spirit of the human being (mankind), and that part of us is characterized by our intelligence, personality, self-consciousness, and our will. Man's spirit is Devine in origin. It is a part of our nature, a state of mind, our mood, our disposition.

This spirit we are discussing and defining is, as are so many other designed parts of our nature are in need of growth, proper training, development and molding. When we are taught and developed at some point we become discernible. That is we develop to have understanding to know what's what...wrong from right. At that point we are responsible. And that is not all of it. We must continue to develop. We must! We must develop and grow strong in spirit and wisdom and the grace of God will be upon us. That's what happened to Christ (as a child) and it's a blessing

because it will happen to us. Note Luke 1:80 and 2:40. And yes, the grace of God was upon Him. Knowledge motivated by love, faith, desire, enthusiasm (spirit), and determination are the developing and cultivating (growth) ingredients of all Christians. If we will grab hold of that our hearts will be in the praying mode. God will hear our prayers, and we know that. Yes He will hear us, and He will answer our prayers. HE will give us strength and love to receive HIS answer, knowing that HIS will be done in all things. Our spirit and understanding, the ingredient of our prayer, is the vitality of our intellect in the actions to our walk in life. It's fuel to life. Faith and love are the micro-chips to the mind, our biblical heart. God has blessed us all in our prayer life and in doing His will. Our prayer must be HIS will be done.

Prayers must be offered in faith and full assurance that God will hear our prayers, and He will answer our prayer. Jesus in His own words, (Matthew 21:22) tell us that *"All things, whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing you shall receive."* Praise the Lord! And Amen! Here the words of Jesus in James 1:5-6, *"If any of you lack wisdom, ask God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."* Do you doubt that we need to be taught how to pray? (See also Hebrews 10:22, about drawing near to God with a true heart).

Prayers must be offered with confidence and submission to God. The Psalmist said in Psalm 56:9, *"When I cry out to You, then shall mine enemies turn back; this I know (confidence) for God is for me."* Psalms 118:6 blesses us to know that, *"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear."* Jesus prayed saying, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what YOUR will."*

Prayers must be offered with unfeigned lips, that is to say, heart-felt, genuine, sincere, and with deliberation, which is forethought. The prayer of Psalm 17:1 cries out to say, *"Hear a just cause O LORD, attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips."* Rather deliberate...is it not? Now let us give ear to what is said in Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, *"Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven and you on earth; therefore let your words be few."* I am convinced we can know through study and being taught what we must do and what we must say when we exercise the blessing of loving God as we worship and do his will. When we utter our heart, we are worshiping and doing the will of our LORD.

Prayer must be offered with truth, with humility and with holiness. Note the blessing of what is said of prayer in these words. *"The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth"* (Psalm 145:18). The truth and learning process continues by the knowledge given by 2Chronicles 7:14, as it says that *"My people who are called by My name will (please note, will has the meaning of must) humble themselves, and pray and seek MY face."...those who worship Him must worship in 'spirit and truth' "* (John 4:24). *"I will therefore (God's desire), that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting"* (1 Timothy 2:8). Effective prayer is conditioned on holy living. Do we know that? *"The effective fervent (enthusiastic) prayer of a righteous man avails much: (James 5:16).* We must study to know, grow and maintain a life of Christlikeness. Here is the place for an AMEN!

Prayer is God's plan for man. God's plan is as authoritative as a command. God's word is His plan, and it is His plan for man and thus it is His command. It was God's plan in the lives of His people before the coming of Christ. Examples are Abraham (Genesis 18:22-33; 20:17); Moses (Numbers 11:2; 21:7-9); David (Ps. 51:1-17; 86:3); Daniel (Dan. 6:10, 11; 9:19). And that's not all.

Prayer was a great part in the life of Jesus the Christ. Christ prayed all night, just before choosing the twelve (Luke 6:12). Christ prayed just after the feeding of a multitude (Mat. 14:23;

Mark 6:46). You remember, Christ prayed at the mount of transfiguration (Luke 8:28-29). Christ prayed at the close of the last supper (John 17:1-26). Jesus prayed at Gethsemane (Matthew. 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-42; Luke. 22:39-46). Jesus our Lord and Savior prayed on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Prayer was in the lives of the disciples and apostles. They prayed as a group (Acts 1:24; 2:42); Peter, on the housetop (Acts 10:9); Paul and Silas in a Philippian jail (Acts 16:25); and Paul and the group at Miletus (Acts 20:36; 21:5). It is God's desire that men pray in every place (1 Timothy 2:8; Acts 16:25); John 4:20-24). Men need to pray (James 4:10; Acts 8:22). Prayers availeth much James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 4:16). Just go ahead and read all of Hebrews chapter 4, it will do help.

God has revealed how men should pray:

- 1). Pray with the spirit and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15)
- 2). Pray in faith (James 1:5-7; 1 John 5:14-15)
- 3). Pray to be heard of God rather than men (Matthew 6:5-8)
- 4). Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 5:20)

God has revealed for what men should pray:

- 1). Pray for daily sustenance (Luke 11:3; Matthew 6:11 7:7-11). *"Give us day by day our daily bread." "Ask, and it will be given to you..."*
- 2). Pray for a peaceful life (1 Timothy 2:1-2)...please read.
- 3). Pray for wisdom (James 1:5-6)...please read
- 4). Pray for help relative to temptation:
 - A). Protection (Matthew 26:41)...please read
 - B). Strength (1 Corinthians 10-13)...please read
 - C). Deliverance from temptation (Matthew 6:13; 1 Peter 3:12; 2 Peter 2:9)
- 5). Pray for forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2). *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us..." "...if anyone sins our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world."*
- 6). Pray for help in afflictions (James 5:13). *"Is anyone among you afflicted? Let him pray."* Read James 5:13-18, then pray again.
- 7). Pray for the peace of God (Philippians 4:6). Please read and embrace this prayer.
- 8). Pray for laborers for the harvest (Matt. 9:38; Luke. 10:2; John 4:35). Read and study these...please. We must be totally convinced that prayer is a great **must** of the Christian's life. It is taught throughout the Bible. It's taught that we must learn. We must know about praying. We must grow in the nature of our being which God put into us, and it is for His Glory and our good...our need. Let me say it this way, "Our prayer life is one of the greatest measuring gauges and blessings from God that is for Christian's benefit and His Holy Word teaches us that...AMEN! By-the-way, I have a study which will be coming your way which has the title "Needs and Wants"

Here now is some interesting data about prayer/pray. At my request, Sister Helen Davidson researched a Bible program on her computer and provided me these very interesting figures. The following words and the number of times cited in the Bible are:

Pray; 313; Prayer: 109; Prayers: 24; Prayed: 65; Praying; 20' Prayeth: 7; Prayest: 2 times. The total of all of them is 540.

It is sad but nevertheless true, that some prayers will not be answered. The Bible tells us that a sinner's prayer will not be answered. John 9:31 has this to say, *"Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will He hears."* Note also Proverbs 28:9, which says, *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."*

A doubter's prayer will not receive anything from the LORD. Here is what James 1:6-7 has to say, "...ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."

A man who is selfish or lustful will not receive an answer to his prayer. James tells this kind of person if "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss (wrong, faulty, improper) that you may consume it upon your lust."

What shall be said? It is recommended to all of us to know and practice the great privilege of prayer, properly and in spirit and truth. "O Lord we need thee every hour, in Jesus name AMEN.

It may be that you do or you have...but if you haven't and are willing, write out your prayer...say about two pages worth. Then pray it aloud to God. Do a second; third, or as many as you want. Pray your written prayers aloud so that not only God will hear but you will here also. It will be all right, believe it, God understands, and He will know that you are striving to grow in your blessed prayer life and dedicated life to God's will.

This is a way of teaching yourself. It will help...guaranteed! Go back to the 2nd paragraph of page 2 to outline and formulate your thoughts and words by it. It will help.

I am enclosing a prayer which I wrote as a poem. Pray it aloud in Jesus name! I'm suggesting this not for show and tell but to honestly help. I've been there. I know, and I am still growing at the good age of 84! I am not ashamed; I am weak and need help!

God Bless – I love you! I'm Bill Richardson, Member of Hartselle Church of Christ, Hartselle, AL

A PRAYER FOR STRENGTH OF ALL MANKIND

"Grant us O' Lord an audience today, hear us O' Lord and grant us the prayer that we pray. It's not for us alone 'O Lord you know, but for all mankind. Your creation Lord, whom you love; You are Love and this we know, it is Your Word that tells us so.

"Give 'O Lord strength and wisdom to all Your precious souls, help all of us through Your Spirit and Love success in life's duties, and grant Your blessings to each of us in reaching our goals.

"Bless 'O Lord each of us with peace of mind, with strong wills to always be patient, gentle, loving and kind. Increase 'O Lord our character with attributes which are strong and steady, to remain always serving ably, willingly, and ready.

"Help all of us 'O Lord in our determination to always do that which is right, working and serving diligently to accomplish our goals in loving service to You with all our might.

"Bless and help 'O Lord each dear soul to know.... to know through You the right way we must go. The way O' Lord to do that which will be blessed by your hand, to know and acknowledge that You are in command.

"Grant 'O Lord your strength for us to lean upon, when our way may be difficult and trying, and our strength almost gone, and grant us O' Lord the strength of insight not to quit but to continue on.

"Bless us Lord in strength as we grow in love for you. Grant all of us Lord your love and strength all the days of our life, and help us to let our light shine for You, steadfast and bright.

"This prayer we pray through Him who suffered and bore our pain, this prayer we pray in Jesus name, AMEN!"

Prayer by: William Thomas Richardson, Jr.