

APPROPRIATING THE POWER OF PRAYER AND FAITH

Ron Christian, Compiler

**“Growing A Godly Life” - Devotional Series
Book 8 - “Prayer”**

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As compiler of this series, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Shirley J Ruiz, who dedicated her great skills, abounding energy, and many hours of her time in typing the entire manuscripts of this devotional series. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessing to many persons.

‘GROWING A GODLY LIFE’ - Series (13 Books)

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INTRODUCTION

**By
Ron Christian**

In his most helpful book, “Alive To God Through Prayer”, Donald Demaray notes: “We must remember that we are all the product of prayer. Apparently no one is saved aside from someone’s prayers... There is absolutely no substitute for the work of prayer... If we had even a glimpse of the value of prayer we would rise with new eagerness to the challenge of its work.” (pg. 124)

Every great revival in history has been preceded by earnest prayer. It was so of the 1970 revival which is now referred to as the ‘Asbury Revival’ (which started in the small community of Asbury, Kentucky, on the campus of Asbury College). The following is by Dwight Gregory, a first-hand (eye witness) account of the beginning of the ‘Asbury Revival’. “By now many of you will have already heard of the revival which began at Asbury College and is now spreading across the continent. It has been my privilege to share in this awakening, and I would like to relate my own impressions of what is happening. The movement, I believe, can be traced to what was termed the Great Experiment, suggested by Asbury College President Dennis Kinlaw at the beginning of the year. A number of students covenanted together to discipline themselves in prayer and study of the Bible in a more serious way. When people do this, something is bound to happen. On the morning of February 3, 1970, the college chapel service was given over to testimonies. After a number of the predictable cliché-ridden testimonies had been given, one or two campus leaders with notoriously non-spiritual reputations stepped to the pulpit to bear witness to real transformation within that week. Right after that, a faculty member stepped up to say that there might be others who wanted to surrender their lives to God. Almost immediately, the altar was filled with over 150 students. By the next day, the revival had spread across the street to the seminary, and nearby newspapers and television stations had begun reporting the story. People were making confessions, being reconciled to fellow Christians, and being filled with the Holy Spirit and giving radiant testimonies. There were many new conversions and a number of testimonies to physical healing. By the weekend, teams had gone out to witness in many other schools and churches, and were bringing back reports just as dramatic as what was being seen in Wilmore. Classes were dismissed at the college for a full week.”

Looking back - in retrospect - it can be said that the ‘Asbury Revival’(in which thousands were converted throughout the Nation and even other Countries) was one of the ‘greatest revivals’ of the twentieth century! It all started with several college students who became serious about the discipline of intercessory prayer!

Prayer is the most important activity in which any child of God can be engaged! The Scriptures tell us that the prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects (James 5:16). Prayer is “loving communion (with God) which may help in the promotion of

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God’s will, where as without the prayer it might be frustrated.” (A Place To Stand; Elton Trueblood; pg. 90) Said St. Augustine many years ago: “Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.” It is God who is the Source of power, but His power is ‘released’ as a result of the prayers of His faithful children!

It is important that every family becomes a ‘praying family’. Why? For many good reasons, but one reason is summarized by the popular slogan: “The family that prays together, stays together!” Prayer is a great cohesive factor for the Christian Family. A ‘family altar’ should be in every home, adapted especially to the children of the home. Variety and regularity are the two important ingredients. Use an interesting and colorful Bible Story Book with the smaller children. Begin using songs - choruses, Scripture songs, hymns - with your younger children (one of the most important things you can do in your ‘child rearing’). Let various family members take turns praying out loud. Keep your ‘family altar’ time simple, interesting, short - but consistent. For adults, use a helpful family devotional guide, such as ‘Our Daily Bread’ or one of the many devotional books authored by E. Stanley Jones (or one of many other devotional books and booklets). Praying together helps keep God at the center of your home, and it helps develop a prayerful and reverent attitude in your home.

Choose a prayer partner, and pray regularly with him/her. There is great strength produced when two pray together and share together and rejoice together. Jesus said that when two or three are gathered together in His name that He is in the midst! He also said that if two of you agree as ‘touching any matter’, the request shall be granted! Believe together and you will receive together. Choose a prayer partner and begin to build a prayer life together. Meet once a week together and spend some time sharing specific needs - and believe and expect those needs to be supplied. Some prayer partners may choose to share with each other daily - over the phone. Ask God to reveal to you whom He wants you to ‘partner with’ - your spouse, your close friend, or even a new believer.

Be sure to participate in a ‘Prayer Group’. There is sufficient Biblical precedent for the small prayer group. Acts 2: 1 says, “*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*” Pentecost came upon a group, not a single individual. Acts 4: 31 speaks again of a group prayer meeting: “*And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.*” It is urgent that several prayer groups be established among the families in a local church - if that church expects to see a revival happen in its midst. Donald Demaray notes that “in every case of a movement of God’s Spirit, group prayer is involved.”

Observes William Sangster: “Something seems to be added to prayers offered in fellowship which is not available in the same measure to the same prayers offered by the same people in separation.”

Give high priority to the establishment and maintenance of prayer ‘cells’ in your local church. Notes Sangster: “If prayer is fellowship with the Almighty God of the Universe, how can it be other than the chief business and privilege of every day?”

Notes Donald Demaray: “Just think what a bulwark against temptation group prayer really is! Just think of the planning, aspirations, and dreams that come to light in the group! Think of the burdens shared! The joys revealed! The courage restored!” (Alive To God Through Prayer; pg. 66) During the early years of my pastorate (when I myself was only in my twenties), I became a member of a small prayer group, the results of which were ‘far-reaching’ in my young life as a minister. All the other dozen members in the group were elderly (from about 60 to 90 years of age). I cannot find the words to describe the joy and comfort and insights which I gained from those ‘old saints of God’, all of whom were ‘seasoned prayer warriors’ (they knew how to ‘bring heaven down to earth’ through their fervent prayers). All of those ‘old saints’ are now ‘citizens of the heavenly kingdom’. I had the privilege of preaching at each one of their funerals. They, ‘being dead’, still speak to me! The ten or more years during which time I weekly spent praying with them (in the ‘cottage prayer meetings’) were some of the ‘greatest years of my life’! I shall never be the ‘same’ for having known and prayed with those sweet and saintly persons, and I look forward to meeting them some wonderful day in heaven! From this most ‘delightful experience’ of praying with these older folks, I would strongly encourage every younger person (including every young pastor) to ‘team up’ with one or two (or a dozen) ‘old saints of God’ - to pray and to read the Scriptures and to share joys and sorrows - in a ‘cottage prayer group’!

Another ‘means’ by which you can effectively practice prayer is through your participation in your church’s ‘Prayer Chain’. The ‘prayer chain’ is for the purpose of informing all in your church ‘family’ as quickly as possible of urgent prayer requests. Each person in the ‘prayer chain’ is asked to make his call to the next person on the ‘chain’ as soon as possible. In a matter of a few minutes nearly all in your church family can be aware of prayer needs. If you are not actively involved in your church’s ‘prayer chain’, I would encourage you to become a participant. If your church has no ‘prayer chain’, why not ask your pastor if you can be responsible for starting a ‘chain’?

Just as breathing the air of the atmosphere is essential for physical life, so breathing from the celestial atmosphere of prayer is imperative to maintaining spiritual health. When breathing ceases, life is snuffed out! Spiritual life cannot long last without prayer!

Prayer is our privilege and our responsibility. It is our privilege because God has allowed man to help Him to carry out His purposes for this world. It is our responsibility because there is reason to believe that if we do not pray, God’s will is thereby frustrated.

Says E. Stanley Jones: “Most of the casualties in the spiritual life are found at the place of a weakened prayer life. When the prayer life is toned up the whole of the rest of the life is toned up with it. Prayer is pivotal. I find I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If prayer fades, power fades. When I pray I’m like an electric bulb put into the socket, full of light and power. When I don’t pray I’m like that same bulb pulled out of the socket - no light, no power. And it is as simple as that. And it works with a mathematical precision. In prayer our weakness is linked to Almightyness, our ignorance linked to Infinite Wisdom, our finite self to the Infinite Self. When every other way is closed, the way of prayer is open.” (Christian Maturity; pg. 302)

In your ‘practice’ of prayer, it is helpful (and enjoyable) to use considerable ‘variety’. For instance: (1) Getting on your knees in a specific place (great men in history had a special ‘prayer closet’ to get alone daily to commune with their God and to fervently intercede for the needs of ‘lost persons’); (2) Sitting comfortable with eyes open, carrying on a normal conversation with God (one of the ‘great prayer warriors’ whom I knew, when I was a college student, was Dr. Mary Alice Tenney - a professor at Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois - who greatly enjoyed sitting on her couch and looking out the picture window of her house into the ‘forest’ in her back yard, while she communed in prayer with her Heavenly Father); (3) Walking and praying. For several months, when I was a young pastor, I daily walked around a block in my neighborhood three consecutive times, in the cool evening, praying while I walked. The three times reminded me of the great triune God. Each of the three blocks, I talked to one of the three persons of the Trinity - Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Walking three times around the block also symbolically represented the bringing of the whole of myself (body, mind, spirit) to the whole of the triune God; (4) Riding or traveling in your car, ‘practicing the presence of God’ by visualizing God sitting in the seat with you, talking and communing with you; (5) Jogging in the early morning, and praying with relaxation as you jog (this has been a long-time and very ‘profitable’ experience for me, with physical and mental and spiritual benefits); (6) Writing out your prayers in a ‘daily journal’ or a diary (once a month or once each quarter have a ‘half day of prayer and meditation’ in the mountains or alone somewhere, reflecting on your diary entries and your written prayers); (7) Praying with the Scriptures, using great portions such as Psalm 103, 111, 145 as the ‘guides’ for your praying and praising; (8) Using a book of written prayers occasionally (like the classic written prayers by Peter Marshall). The hymn book is an excellent source of written prayers that eloquently expresses the deep desires of your soul. Most mornings, during my ‘personal devotions’, I receive great encouragement and comfort from reading the poetry - hymns - written by Charles Wesley or Isaac Watts or another ‘great hymn writer’; (9) Fasting and praying one or two meals a week; (10) Keeping a prayer notebook, and recording answers to your prayers.

These are only a few suggestions to add greater ‘variety’ to your prayer life, but there are many other ways by which you may develop creativity in your approach to the Almighty God! Use your own ‘sanctified imagination’!

Exercising ‘patience’ is one of the ‘challenges’ in your work at developing an effective ‘prayer life’. Learning to be patient as you learn to pray and to wait for tangible (visible) results is very important in the life of a person or in the corporate life of a church. One pastor comments: “Too many people start a disciplined devotional life thinking it’s going to be a source of great joy from the beginning. That’s not true. It often feels like drudgery, particularly at the start. The joy only comes slowly, in snatches. That which is worthwhile only comes slowly. It was Alexander Pope who said, ‘Some people will never learn anything because they understand everything too soon.’ If we are willing to take our time and be satisfied with truths slowly revealed as God unfolds them, we’ll begin to see the fruits of the devotional life.” (Leadership Magazine; Winter 1982; pages 37, 38) Learning to pray might be likened unto learning to play the piano. Learning to pray, like learning to play the piano, may be slow at first, but the longer you persist in practice, the more skilled you will become and the more enjoyable the practice of praying will become. Remember, the test of effective praying is not how exhilarated you feel, but how well the insights gained through prayer are worked into your daily life. “If we have really exposed ourselves to the Word and come into contact with God, it will affect our daily life. And that is what we want.” (Lorne Sanny)

There are ‘problems’ (‘challenges’) that any sincere believer will ‘encounter’ in his attempt to develop a mature ‘prayer life’. One of many ‘problems’ is the problem of distractions of one’s mind when he is attempting to pray. Notes Lorne Sanny concerning this common problem: “As outside things pop into your mind, simply incorporate those items into prayer. If it’s some business item you must not forget, jot it down...It will be natural for things to occur to you during your prayer that you should have done, so put them down, pray about them and plan how you can take care of them and when. Don’t just push them aside or they will plague you.”

One ‘aid’ to help you to deal with this ‘problem’ of ‘wandering thoughts’ is to use a written prayer list. “Making a prayer-list is a means of grace in itself. Some people make a list to cover a month; others work on the week as a unit; nearly all these serious intercessors have a ‘priority’ list, which is constantly changing, for people in the most urgent need and for whom (during their period of acute necessity) they pray every day...Certainly we cannot use a prayer-list as though it were a telephone directory, and just run our eye down a list of names. Nor is it much better, I think to speak the names aloud, if it is all done at speed. There is more in it than that. Wait before God in the quietness. Recollect His presence, His power and His love. Wait...” (Daily Readings; William Sangster; pg. 204)

Another one of the many ‘problems’ (challenges’) in learning to pray effectively is the problem of learning to wait quietly before God - especially in our modern society when there is a great ‘premium’ placed on quickness and speed, and when most people (by ‘nature’) are ‘impatient’. It is hard for some Christians to understand, in our society

which is accustomed to receiving food quickly at our many ‘fast food restaurants’, why they should be ‘required’ to wait for answers to their prayers! But, learning to wait quietly before God is an absolute necessity if we are ever to develop skill in communication with God and to enjoy communion with the Divine One. How can you ‘deal’ with this problem of impatience? Perhaps to begin with: Pray short prayers more often rather than longer prayers only ‘once in a while’. The point is this: Be consistent in talking to God daily regardless of the length of your talks with God. The more you talk to God, the more you will come to ‘know’ Him and the more you will come to rely upon Him. When that reliance upon God increases, your prayers will become more ‘natural’ and more ‘frequent’.

Pray short ‘flash prayers’ throughout your entire day. Practice saying a quick ‘flash prayer’ for everyone that you talk to. Practice having a short prayer in the home of everyone that you are with for any length of time, especially when you visit in the home of another Christian. Without becoming ‘pious’ or ‘unnatural’, make praying with your friends and family ‘a way of life’. Be ‘short’ and ‘natural’ and ‘joyous’ in your ‘on the spot’ praying with your friends (especially with fellow believers). When someone asks you to pray for him (which is rather often), stop right there (if possible) and pray a short and specific prayer with that person about the request you have just received from your friend. Too often, we tell persons ‘I will pray for that request’ and then we ‘forget’ or ‘neglect’ to pray specifically for our friends’ specific needs during our ‘quiet time’.

Frank Laubach, the author of “Prayer, The Mightiest Force In The Word”, notes that “everybody in every ordinary day has hundreds of chinks of idle wasted time which may be filled with ‘flash prayers’ ten seconds or a minute long.” Laubach gives illustrations of such moments: Upon awakening in the morning; in the bath; dressing; walking down stairs; asking the blessing at table; leaving the house; riding or walking to work; waiting at the red lights; entering the elevator; between interviews; waiting for an appointment; preparing the lunch; falling asleep. And you can think of many other times when you can easily engage in ‘flash praying’!

Why pray? For many reasons, but one of the most obvious reasons is because ‘prayer works’. There is ‘great power’ in prayer. Prayer ‘works’ because prayer is the means by which a human being comes to know the Creator of the Universe more intimately! Said one wise soul: “The purpose of our life on earth is to know God.” Mediate for a few moments on Isaiah 30: 18 - “And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you.” Andrew Murray says about this amazing verse: “The vision of God waiting on us will give us new impulse and inspiration to our waiting on Him...If God waits for us, then we may be sure we are more than welcome; that God rejoices to find those he has been seeking.” Just think about this truth - you are so important to God that He is waiting to have fellowship with you! The following is a ‘letter from Jesus’ (the ‘product of some person’s imagination’ but ‘very stirring’ and ‘revealing’):

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Dear Friend,

I just had to send you a note to tell you how much I love you. I saw you talking to your friend yesterday, and I waited all day hoping that you would want to talk with me also. As evening drew near, I gave you a sunset to close your day and a cool breeze to rest you. I waited. You never did call on me. Oh, yes, it hurts; but I still love you.

I have many gifts for you. This morning you awakened late and rushed about your work with no thoughts of me, and my tears joined the rain. Today you looked sad. I wanted to touch you and let you know I was near, but I didn't.

It makes my heart ache to see you so sad. I understand what it is like when friends hurt you and let you down. My friends have done that many times. I will love you no matter what. If you would only stop long enough to listen to me when I speak to you.

I speak to you in the blue sky and the green grass. I whisper my love on the trees. I breathe my love in the scent of the flowers. I shout it in the mountain streams. I sing in the bird's song. I clothe you with the warmth of the sunshine, and I give perfume to scent the air you breathe. My love for you is deeper than the ocean and bigger than the biggest want or need. If only you knew how much I want to walk and talk with you. We could spend an eternity together in heaven. I know how difficult it is living in your world...I really do know.

I want you to meet my Father. He can help you. My Father is like that, you know. Please come and talk to me, anytime. I have so much to share with you. You are free to choose me. It is your decision. I have chosen you, and I will wait...because “I love you.”

Your Friend,

Jesus Christ

Prayer is powerful because prayer is the means of coming to know God more intimately. Also, prayer is powerful because prayer is a means of gaining strength to live faithfully in an ungodly world. One person noted that the first fruit he recognized as a result of his devotional life was “an improved ability to live increasingly untainted in a tainted world.” Francis de Sales, a ‘saint’ from the distant past, called prayer the ‘spiritual nosegay’. What is a ‘nosegay’? A nosegay was a small bouquet of sweet-smelling flowers that ladies carried in the streets of seventeenth-century Europe so they could

stand the stench of the open sewers along the streets. So, spiritually-speaking, prayer becomes a means of living faithfully in a sewer-like world that reeks with the stench of evil and brokenness and wretchedness! Prayer makes life ‘endurable’ for the believer, and the result of prayer in the life of a believer is the aroma of Christlikeness which is spread as a believer is surrounded by the odor of sin.

Why pray? Because prayer ‘works’. Prayer enables one to know God more intimately. Prayer enables one to remain ‘sweet’ with the fragrance of Christ’s character amidst the corruption of a rotting and sinful world. Third, prayer ‘works’ as a God-given means of bringing about great spiritual changes in our world which desperately needs to be spiritually transformed! The Bible is filled with illustrations of God’s transforming power, both in the lives of individuals and even in the corporate life of an entire nation! Several famous Biblical characters illustrate this truth: Abraham (Genesis 18: 22-33). Moses (Exodus 32: 11-14), Elijah (James 5: 16-18). Think of the amazing power of prayer to change individuals, groups, and even nations! “Prayer prepares the way for revival, creating the atmosphere of intense desire and yieldedness of will in which the Holy Spirit can work. Prayer loosens the grip of the Evil One on enslaved wills and darkened minds and seared consciences. Prayer whets the appetite of the believer for greater spiritual blessings. Prayer brings about a unity of mind and heart and purpose among Christians, until petty jealousies and selfish desires are forgotten, and the one consuming desire in the church is that God may be glorified in the salvation of souls. In every great spiritual awakening in the history of the church, importunate, believing prayer has paved the way for revival, and has drawn down the power of God to human need.” (Fred Hoffman)

I do not recall the ‘source’ from which I received the following account which illustrates this latter ‘point’ (on the power of prayer to transform individuals and groups). In 1857, a layman by the name of Jeremiah Lanphier had a great concern for people in his New York City neighborhood and he began a prayer meeting at noon in his church. The first day he met, he waited for one-half hour before six persons finally showed up at his ‘prayer meeting’. The next week 20 people came to pray for the entire hour, and the third week 40 people prayed for the hour. The group decided to pray daily rather than weekly, and the number of people that responded to the call of prayer grew so fast that other churches began to announce noon prayer meetings. Because the churches finally could not accommodate the crowds, the police and fire departments threw open their buildings for prayer services. Finally theater buildings began to open for prayer meetings. On the opening day, one theater with a seating capacity of 3000 was filled and the overflow crowd gathered in the barroom. It is reported that the convicting power of the Holy Spirit was not only present in the regular prayer meetings, but pervaded the total life of the city. Women found Christ in their parlors; and a conductor on a New York horse-car was converted in his car; whole families of Jews were led to see Christ as their Messiah; the most hardened infidels were melted by the Spirit’s power, and led to the cross. It is estimated that at least 50,000 were converted in New York City alone,

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as a result of this prayer revival. The revival spread to other cities where noon prayer meetings were held daily. During the twenty-four-month period following the first outbreak of the Revival late in 1857, it is calculated that there were more than 1,000,000 converts!

One of the most sacred experiences of my life (as a child and a youth) was with my mother in prayer - kneeling by her at the side of her bed, or kneeling at the living room couch. My mother loved to pray, and she liked the posture of kneeling (symbolizing humility and dependence upon God). Shortly after my 94 year-old mother, Helen Irene Christian, died on March 2, 2000, the following description appeared in her obituary (which was printed in three ‘city newspapers’): “Mrs. Christian, a life-time member of the Free Methodist Church, was an active and committed Christian her entire life. She was known to her family and friends as ‘The Prayer Warrior’. Much of her time was devoted to prayer, Bible study - and to serving others, both young and old.” To commemorate her life as a “Prayer Warrior”, our friends (shortly after her funeral) gave us a plant which is called “The Prayer Plant”.

“When Dr. Bacchus of Hamilton College was dying, his doctor came into the room and gave him a brief examination. Then the doctor conferred quietly and seriously with friends standing in the doorway. ‘What did the doctor say?’ asked Dr. Bacchus. ‘He said, sir, that you cannot live more than one-half hour.’ ‘Then take me out of bed and place me on my knees!’ he pleaded. ‘Let me spend the time in prayer for this sinful world.’ Moments later, Dr. Bacchus passed from bended knee to Paradise.” (How You Can Pray With Power and Get Results; Lowell Lundstrom; pg. 53)

FOR VICTORIOUS FAITH

**O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe;**

**That will not murmur or complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God;**

**A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;**

**That bears, unmoved, the world's dread frown,
Nor heeds its scornful smile;
That seas of trouble cannot drown,
Nor Satan's arts beguile;**

**A faith that keeps the narrow way
Till life's last hour is fled,
And with a pure and heavenly ray
Illumes a dying bed.**

**Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste, e'en here, the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.**

W. H. Bathurst

CHAPTER ONE

PRACTICE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

II Chronicles 7: 14; Matthew 6: 5-13

PRAYER - THE PRIMARY THING

Prayer is very important to the Christian. It is not, as some folks think, talking into the air when no one is there. Deuteronomy 4: 7 tells us that God is near us when we pray.

There are important promises made to Israel about prayer. They too, may have asked, ‘How shall we pray?’ In II Chronicles 7, God said, ‘*Pray toward this place.*’ It seems we all need to know where God is. For Israel, He was “in His holy temple.” For us, He is in heaven, as Jesus said, “*When you pray, say, ‘Our Father who art in Heaven’*”.

There was and is one more stipulation to being heard when we pray. The Psalmist says, “Let every one who is godly pray.” Here it is more than a privilege; it is an obligation. (Psalm 32: 6) This is true because prayer is a two way street. We ask, He answers. He asks, we answer.

Then we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. It is the place in which and out of which God’s work is done. (Psalm 122: 6) The same may be said of the church. Many arguments and misunderstandings would dissipate if we would let God settle them. In Matthew 6: 5-8, Jesus tells his disciples the same as God told King Solomon in II Chronicles 7: 24. *Do not come bragging about yourself, praying loudly in public, but humble yourself in privacy.*

We are also not to come to God seeking revenge against our enemies, saying, ‘Lord, get him.’ Rather we are to pray for those who persecute us. In Luke 18: 1, Jesus told his disciples a parable to show that they ought always to pray and not to give up. A widow kept returning to a judge, pleading that he would grant her justice against her adversary. She never wearied with being refused, but returned time after time with the same persistent request. The ungodly judge finally answered, not out of caring but out of his weariness of being asked. Jesus says God is not like that, but he desires to hear and answer the prayers of His own children who cry out to Him.

Finally, we have the greatest example how we should pray, that given by Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 6: 9-13. We are to begin not by begging for something, but by asking that His will be done and that His kingdom come; even on earth as it is in Heaven. We must be in line with His will before we may ask anything. Jesus wants us to know that God wills to do things for us when we ask. He wants to give us what we need when we ask.

Probably most importantly, God wants to forgive our sins. In doing this, He wants us to become like him, that is, we can have the power, strength and humility to forgive those who sin against us.

In Jesus’ last statement, it should not be supposed that God might ‘lead us into temptation.’ It is simply the negative side of delivering us from the Evil One, which our heavenly Father always desires to do, if we will let Him.

In conclusion, we should understand that God wants us to talk with Him. He wants us to sit down and take the time to talk where He is.

We must come in holiness, desiring His will and being willing to forgive others also. We must believe He is the Great One or prayer makes no sense. But if He is, He can and will answer whatsoever we ask.

“Father, through prayer, make me what you want me to be.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Prayer changes things!

- William Drewer -

NOTES:

Luke 11: 5-13; Galatians 6: 2

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

One of the great privileges and responsibilities of a Christian is to pray in behalf of others. This includes family, friends, neighbors, city, state, nation and world. Such praying requires perception, persistence and patience. But most of all it asks for a concerned and caring heart.

I knew a woman who prayed for a friend’s salvation for some twenty-five years. The two women first met in an international boarding school in India. One was the daughter of missionaries and the other daughter of the Danish Ambassador to India. While students together the missionaries’ daughter prayed for her roommate. Later, she went to college in the United States while her friend took a job in Denmark. Some years went by with faithful prayer being made for a friend. The Danish woman wrote her acquaintance, who was now married, that she planned a trip to the States and requested a visit. Not only was the visit arranged, but the hostess accompanied her friend to several places throughout the nation and Canada. While on these trips she gently witnessed, but got no response. Undeterred she continued to pray. As the years went by the Christian woman began to wonder if her friend, with whom she regularly corresponded, would ever turn to Christ. You can imagine her joy when she received a letter describing how God had used a women’s conference to bring her friend to Himself!

The caring Christian prays not only for the salvation of others, but for many other needs as well. This is especially true for fellow Christians. When we walk alongside in prayer we “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” What a joy it is to ask someone, “How can I pray for you this week?” My wife and I have found this to be a practice which often opens up opportunities to listen, comfort, counsel and pray.

When you pray for pastors, superintendents, evangelists, missionaries and other church leaders you are also sharing in the ministry of the Word. Certainly you should pray for the church, the Body of Christ on earth. Besides regular intercessory prayer for family members – my wife and I pray daily for our six children, eleven grandchildren and our mothers – you can participate with Christ in the redemption of the world. Somehow, as mysterious as it seems you can have a part in putting together a broken, hurting world. There are many troubled spots where people are starving, suffering and dying. They need prayers in their behalf, because they may be unable to pray for themselves.

The prophet Samuel declared to the people of his nations, “*far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.*” (I Samuel 12: 23) May those of us who love the Lord be able to say the same thing.

“Lord God, you have given me the awesome privilege of coming before your throne in behalf of others. Help me not to take intercessory prayer lightly. Grant me a compassionate heart and sensitive spirit for this eternal work. In Your Name, Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will be alert to the needs of others and faithful in intercessory prayer for them.

- Robert A. Crandall -

NOTES:

Matthew 6: 6-8; Thessalonians 5: 17-18

EXPECTANT PRAYER

Have you recently had one of those spiritual insights that changed your thinking? You know, a “eureka!” experience where you can declare, “I see it now!” The light bulb in your soul goes on when this kind of truth is revealed. Well, I had that happen to me a few months ago. I was reading The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard where he refers to several scientific studies which indicate that profound changes are made in persons for good (such as healing) with, “the appropriate exercise of thought, will and desire.” This happens both in the person who prays for self and the person who prays for others.

For years my parents had in their home a plaque which read, “Prayer Changes Things.” Indeed it does, and I believed it, but somehow as I read these lines from Willard I received new insights into the prayer that changes things and people. This means first of all, that when I am praying for myself or others, I can expect something to happen! Prayer is the expectant exercise of faith. God wants to answer prayer. He wills the best for his children.

I must also focus the energy of thought, will and desire upon my request. I am not just saying words, or “babbling” as Jesus called it. My whole being is involved. I am in earnest to see this prayer answered. Without such concentration of effort I am in danger of purposeless and powerless prayer.

Anytime I “appropriately exercise my thought, will and desire” for something I am praying, I trust God to bring it about. Prayer is not limited to the prayer meeting or the prayer closet! Prayer is appropriate anytime, anywhere. In fact, the ideal is to be in an attitude of prayer at all times, so that it will be as natural as breathing. In that manner I can fulfill the admonition to “pray continually” or “without ceasing.”

In such praying, thanksgiving must be prominent. In Philippians 4: 6 we read, *“in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Not only are we to be thankful for any answered prayer, but for the petitions we present to God, believing that he will answer for our good and his glory. The grateful heart knows how to pray “appropriately.”* Appropriate prayer is neither selfish nor prideful, but rather sincere and in simple trust. Such a heart can be thankful in all circumstances knowing that, “this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

“Dear Lord, like your disciples, I plead, ‘Teach me to pray.’ There is so much I don’t know about prayer. Even though I may have prayed for years I still feel like a neophyte. You have reminded me again today that I must pray as if everything depended upon you. Continue to guide my prayer life as I seek to be your faithful follower. In Jesus’

Name. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will seek to pray as Jesus taught me and the Holy Spirit continues to teach me.

- Robert A. Crandall -

NOTES:

I Thessalonians 5: 17

PRAYING IS GETTING HOLD OF GOD

A little chorus I used to love to sing stated, “God answers prayer in the morning, God answers prayer at noon, God answers prayer in the evening, so keep your heart in tune.”

Is the answer to our prayers the most important reason to pray? Whenever the insistence is on the point that God answers prayer, we are off the track. The meaning of prayer is that we get hold of God, not of the answer. This concept is foreign to our shallow habit of praying.

Many of us pray only at mealtime, morning, noon and night. Then it is just a quick mumble, meaning probably what my older brother used to say, “Here’s the bread and there’s the meat. Now, bless your soul, dig in and eat.”

Ask a small child to pray at mealtime and the hot food may become cold and the cold food may become hot before he finishes. He praises God and petitions God for everyone he knows, name by name, sometimes even the cat and dog. Then when he finishes, he smiles in satisfaction, knowing he has communicated with his loving Father.

Paul says that we should pray without ceasing. How can we do that in our hectic world of rush hour traffic and demanding schedules? If more people would learn the secret of relentless prayer while driving, there would be less road rage. I saw a highway sign the other day that said, “Drive kindly.” When someone cuts in front of you, rather than cursing him, why not pray that God would give that driver peace of heart and a clear head?

When you become irritated at yourself that you snapped at a family member this morning, rather than ridiculing yourself, why not confess it to your forgiving Father and ask for grace to ask forgiveness when you get home?

When your thoughts turn to worry about situations at work, why not ask God to intervene and make you gracious in all your dealings? Then, as difficulties arise during the day, quietly breathe a prayer, thanking God that you know he is in control.

George Mueller was known as a man of prayer, trusting God daily to provide for his orphans. Many times the boys sat down to an empty table and George Mueller would pray, thanking God for the food they would receive. Then a knock would come at the door and bread would be delivered. The story is told that a little boy hid under the master’s bed, seeking to learn the secrets of this great man’s prayer. However, Mueller did not kneel beside the bed, besieging God to hear him hours on end. He simply stepped out of his slippers, pulled his legs under the cover and said, “Good night, Lord.” He had

been communicating with God all day.

Have you ever prayed, “Not what I will, but what you will”? How can we know God’s will? Sometimes are we really saying, “I hope that you agree with what I want, Lord, with my plans, and the way I want to do them.” God’s ways are not always our ways, and the direction He might lead his child may disrupt schedules. Many times God puts us in situations that He might show the glory of God in our lives.

“Thank you, Father, that you are with us and hear us pray at any time in any place.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I pray that I may be more like the Master and thus I strive to know Him better.

- Laura Drewer -

NOTES:

Matthew 21: 12-16

A HOUSE OF PRAYER

Everyone appeared to love Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a white donkey. They threw their garments on the ground before Him and waved palm branches as they shouted, “Hosanna, God save us!” They were actually expecting Jesus to become their king and lift them from the bondage of the Roman government.

However, the scene and the people’s attitude changed quickly when they saw what he did in the temple.

Jesus made a cord of rope and drove out the moneychangers and overturned their tables. His explanation was simply, *“My Father’s house shall be known as a house of prayer and you have made it a den of thieves.”*

Our pastor recently asked the congregation, “Is our church known as a house of prayer? Are we known as a place of fellowship? Are we known for our preaching? Are we known as a missionary church?”

Jesus stated that His Father’s church shall be known as a house of prayer. A beginning prayer and a closing prayer is not enough. We need to pray for one another. There are many hurting people who attend our church every Sunday. Each one of us has needs that God can answer. We need to be concerned about one another.

Our pastor instituted a time within the service when we would turn and join in a circle of prayer of three or four people. He asked us each to state our name and one prayer request, then to take time praying. I have been absolutely amazed at the very personal requests from people I had not known before. The greatest number of requests are for salvation for friends and family members. Other requests express great concern for broken relationships in the family, in the neighborhood and in the workplace.

Some people have complained that they are not comfortable doing this, but our pastor wants our church to become a house of prayer. He has been preaching a series of messages from the book of Acts. He stated that Acts gives us a blueprint for the church today.

Knowing someone who prays or listening to public prayers from the pulpit is not the same as personally lifting our voices in prayer. Many of the praise songs we sing in our services today are really prayers. Some are taken directly from scripture. Our thoughts and voices are lifted together, praising God for who He is and declaring our desire to worship Him.

However, when I leave the church on Sunday, is praise through prayer a part of my daily life? Do I pray for God’s will to be done in my life? Do I ask God to cleanse me and use me as a vessel for His glory?

When Jesus’ disciples asked him to teach them to pray, he gave them the model we now call the Lord’s Prayer. Most of us have memorized it and can quote it without being concerned about the meaning. Read it again and scrutinize the different components: praise and recognition of who God is, petition for daily needs and guidance, a forgiving heart, protection from the Evil One, then back to praise for God again.

If I will pray my prayers according to this pattern daily in humility and expectation, I know God will hear and answer my prayers. In the process, I will become more like my Savior.

“Father, teach me to pray so I experience your holiness and love for me. Teach me to pray in humility, accepting your will and receiving your approval.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To know God is to desire to fellowship with Him in prayer.

- Laura Drewery -

NOTES:

Psalms 13

PROBLEMS? TRY PRAYER AND PRAISE

“Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things.”

H. W. Beecher

The words, *distress*, *affliction* and *trouble*, or forms of the words appear over 500 times in the Bible. This signifies that being a Christian does not exclude you from problems. Believers, throughout all ages, have experienced distress, affliction, and problems.

Psalms 13: 1 & 2. PROBLEMS. David could have written what we call “Problems a Plenty”. On seven occasions, David cried out, “*How long O Lord, how long? Will you forever forget me?*”? The prophet Habakkuk uttered the same words. As we read God’s Word we learn that many *saints* had their Problems a Plenty. They learned that God’s seeming ‘departures’ from them were neither final nor intended to harass. God always has a reason for His actions. His delays have Divine purpose. “*He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.*” Psalms 103: 14, NIV. He knows how much we can bear.

Psalms 13: 3 & 4. PRAYER. James 5: 16 “*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” David cried out, “*Look on me and answer, oh Lord my God*”. David knew only God could help him face his foes and problems. Prayer was his first response, not his last resort! David states in Psalm 6: 9, “*The Lord has heard my cry for mercy: the Lord accepts my prayer.*” A quote from Mme. Chiang Kai-shek: “I used to pray that God would do this or that. Now I pray that God will make His will known to me.” These are both examples of effectual fervent praying.

Psalms 13: 5& 6. PRAISE. After David took his problems to God in prayer, he sang praises to Him. “*I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.*” Philippians 4: 6 says: -- “*by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God*” --. We are the ones who need to praise. Praise enhances our lives. True praise comes from the heart before the answer comes.

“Lord, teach me the joy of effectual, fervent prayer. Teach me to praise, as I petition.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Today, as I give my problems to God, I will offer ‘the sacrifice of praise’ even before God answers my prayers!

- Lowell Weller -

Luke 9: 18-19; Hebrews 4: 14-16

WHAT IS A PROPHET AND A PRIEST?

In the scriptures Jesus Christ is presented in various roles and given numerous names of precious significance for the Christian. People who knew Him when He walked the roads of Palestine recognized His greatness and uniqueness.

Dr. H. Orton Wiley wrote of His offices: “As Mediator, the work of Christ is resolved into the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. Into these offices He was inducted at His baptism, and by a specific anointing with the Holy Spirit became officially the Mediator between God and man.” - (Introduction to Christian Theology, p. 214)

“Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say I am?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.’” A true prophet tells forth a message from God. Jesus in His brief public ministry had been recognized as a prophet - perhaps like one of old, now risen, proclaiming God’s message.

The author of Hebrews sets aside a section (4: 14 - 7: 28) to convince the reader of the superiority of Christ as priest over all previous priests. We note: “...we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God...” (4: 14). Louis H. Evans, Jr. in The Communicator’s Commentary, Hebrews, makes the following observation on this verse: “The summation of the great truth of Christ’s sharing our earthly experience is the foundation of our holding fast our confession. The reasoning is simple and touching; our priest is not so lofty or separated that He is incapable of understanding our human situation. Rather He is one who is totally familiar with it, having been tempted at every turn of life’s foibles and pain because He has been through it all, yet without falling before any of it. Because we know that such a Priest and Prince is on the throne of grace disbursing favor far beyond what we deserve, we can approach without fear or cowering, walking erect and receiving whatever resources we need to live life victoriously, overcoming every obstacle” (pp. 104, 105).

Corrie ten Boom writes of her work among children with learning disabilities. She asked, “What is a prophet and what is a priest?” A little girl answered, “They are both messengers between God and man.” Corrie continued, “Then they are the same - a prophet and a priest?” The girl thought awhile and then answered, “No, a prophet has his back to God and his face to us, and a priest has his face to God and his back to us.” Corrie says, “I wasn’t sure if she had learned that by heart, so I asked her, “Well, what was I today?” She said, “You were both - you told us about God and you were a prophet. Then you prayed. You didn’t pray for yourself, but you prayed for us - then you were a priest.”

What a beautiful observation! Christ is both Prophet and Priest, and in some measure we can also serve these two offices in our lives - as a prophet, telling people of Christ; as a priest, talking with God about people.

“Our Heavenly Father, there are so many people who need the Gospel. Enable me to be a teller of the Good News. So many people are in need of someone to intercede for them. Enable me to pray sincerely with them. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My heart and mind shall be so attuned to God and others that I will serve as a prophet and priest as He so orders.

- Floyd Cooper -

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Tell to what extent you agree (or disagree) with the following statements: “Prayer is a ‘two way street’. We ask, God answers. God asks, we answer.”**
- 2. According to Matthew 6: 5 - 8, what must the ‘attitude’ and ‘approach’ be if one expects God to hear and to respond to his prayer?**
- 3. Share an experience in your own life when you believed that prayer actually changed things.**
- 4. Do you believe that intercessory prayer is your opportunity to participate with Christ in the ‘redemption’ and ‘transformation’ of the world?**
- 5. According to I Samuel 12: 23, what is the consequence when a believer fails to pray for another ‘needy person’?**
- 6. When you wholeheartedly exercise your “thought, will, and desire” upon a person (or a circumstance) in your prayers, what can you expect to happen?**
- 7. Tell to what extent you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “Appropriate prayer is neither selfish or prideful, but rather sincere and in simple trust.”**
- 8. Give your interpretation of the following statement: “Pray as if everything depended upon you, and believe as if everything depended upon God.”**
- 9. Tell to what extent you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “Whenever the insistence is on the point that God answers prayers, we are off the track. The meaning of prayer is that we get hold of God, not of the answer.”**
- 10. When difficulties arise during your daily work and routine, do you quickly and quietly breathe a prayer, thanking God that you know that He is in control of your life and of the world around you?**
- 11. What do you think it means for a Christian to “pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5: 17)?**
- 12. From your own personal life (or from your observation of the life of a ‘fellow Christian’) give an illustration which demonstrates the truth of the following statements: “God’s ways are not always our ways, and the direction He may lead his child may disrupt schedules. Many times God puts us in situations that He might show the glory of God in our lives.”**

- 13. Is your church known as “a house of prayer”? Share the ‘activities’ and ‘programs’ and ‘projects’ in your local church which emphasize the importance and the practice of prayer.**
- 14. Which of the following ‘components’ in the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6: 9-13) mean the most to you? (A) Praise and recognition of who God is; (b) Petition for daily needs and guidance; (c) Request for personal forgiveness; (d) Request for a forgiving heart; (e) Protection from the Evil One; (f) Recognition of God’s greatness and power and glory.**
- 15. Share an experience from your own life which demonstrates the truth of the following statement: “Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things” (Henry Ward Beecher).**
- 16. Have you learned, as a result of your many adversities and hardships, that God’s seeming ‘departures’ were neither final nor intended to harass? How does the truth regarding God’s ‘nature’, as recorded in Psalm 103:14, give you comfort amidst your trials?**
- 17. Should you (as a believer) pray that God will “do this or that” (specifically) for you, or should you simply pray that God will make His ‘will’ known to you? Do you think that God’s “will” (at times) is “adaptable” and “flexible”, and that God will therefore “accommodate” His will to fulfill the desires of your personal requests?**
- 18. Why is it vitally important for a believer to “praise” God, even when he does not receive the answer to his prayers which he greatly desired?**
- 19. According to Hebrews 4: 14-16, what is the ‘basis’ of a Christian’s confidence in coming “boldly unto the throne of grace”?**
- 20. How do you distinguish between the ‘work’ (‘function’) of a ‘prophet’ and a ‘priest’, and in what ways did Jesus fulfill the ministry of both prophet and priest? In what ways can you (as a believer) fulfill both of these ‘functions’?**

CHAPTER TWO

ACKNOWLEDGE CONDITIONS OF PRAYER

Matthew 5: 41

CAN YOU SPARE A BUCK?

Perhaps it was a test. Definitely, it was an answer to prayer. Upon reflection, it was probably both. During morning prayer (unfortunately, not a daily practice), I requested to be able to hear the Holy Spirit speak to me. For some selfish reason, I wanted to personally know that my Lord was hearing my prayers and would indeed answer them. You would think, after this many years of being a Christian I would not feel the need to push God in this manner. However, I do know enough to realize that in order to be able to hear God speak, I would have to be willing to be obedient. The more consistent our obedience when we pray, the easier it becomes to hear His voice. So I prayed, “Holy Spirit, speak to me today.”

Answers to prayers come with many faces. We expect the smiling, good-natured, full of glory kind of face. This face was downcast. This face looked desperate. This face was of a healthy looking young (younger than me) man wearing a sweatshirt and stocking cap...just enough to keep warm with the dropping evening temperature. He stood on my front porch holding an empty red plastic container designed for storing gasoline. Hurriedly, yet politely he asked if I could give him a dollar for gas, leaving me to assume that he had run out of fuel somewhere in the neighborhood.

Knowing the nearest gas station was half a mile away, I told him that I would drive him in my car to purchase the gasoline. I excused myself for a minute in order to put on a pair of shoes. While tying the laces I questioned, “What am I doing? Why am I taking a stranger in my car in order to buy him some fuel?” It sure would have been easier to just give him a dollar. But the service station was some distance way...I had the time...he was in need...so I resolved to take him with me.

By the time I returned to the front door, the man was gone. I stepped onto my porch in order to find him. Perhaps he would be beside my car, waiting for me to take him to the station. But he was not there. I looked up and down the street and could see no one. “He couldn’t have walked out of my line of sight in this short time” I thought. How could he simply disappear? I felt heartbroken because I could not help the man.

Saddened by the sudden turn of events, I headed toward my house when I heard his voice. *“Could you spare a dollar for some gas?”* Looking across the street, I saw him speaking to a neighbor as he did to me only a few minutes earlier. Did he really need the gas? I was willing to take him to the station and back to his car, but he could not...or would not wait for me.

My conclusion was blunt and obvious. This was a scam. It was a twisted ploy to try and hustle money from innocent, caring individuals. No one wants to see a man run out of gas. I’ve had to borrow money for the very same reason. But he was taking advantage of the kind folks in my neighborhood. I did have to give him high marks for ingenuity - it was rather novel.

But how does this relate to my morning prayer? I asked God to help me be obedient when He spoke to me. Although I did not hear a voice from heaven telling me to drive this man to the station, I somehow knew that is what God would have wanted me to do. Obedience is not always accomplishing what God asks; it is found in being *willing* to do what God wants us to do. For the moment, I was willing to “go the extra mile” for this man. Jesus instructed his followers to carry a soldier’s cloak for two miles when they were only required to walk one mile. *“If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles”* (Matthew 5: 41). It is God’s will that we go beyond normal, worldly expectations. Taking the man to the gas station, for me, would have been the right decision as opposed to handing him a dollar bill. I am sorry that I could not help him and that he really did not need my help. There is an assuring peace in my heart, however. My spirit did hear the voice of the Holy Spirit urging me to help him. Perhaps he was a con artist pulling me into his scheme. On the other hand, maybe he was an angel in disguise (Hebrews 13:2).

“Lord, help me to be willing to hear and obey your will today. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not be surprised when God answers my prayers...instead, I will be prepared to obey.

- Thomas Duckworth -

NOTES:

1 Samuel 15: 22

A MATTER OF TRUST

The wisest decision I made while driving through a snow storm one day was to find a radio station which provided road and weather information. As I listened to the radio announcers offer up-to-the-minute details about accident spots and road conditions, I not only found it useful but soothing. Their confident voices kept encouraging me to drive slowly and carefully. Before long, I was relaxed and able to brave the weather and icy roads.

Upon reflection, I considered how hearing those radio voices kept me calm and gave me direction. I thought how wonderful it would be if I could have that same experience with life. If I could turn on a receiver in my brain and listen to a voice give me encouragement and direction, I would be calm and confident in life. But I can do this. After all, that is what prayer is all about!

The voice of God is always near. He is forever speaking to us, if we are willing to listen. One thing I have learned about the voice of God is that when God speaks, He whispers. The world and the lures of the world which mislead us, are always screaming in our ears. To hear the gentle, guiding voice of God, we must listen for His quiet whisper. He may be speaking to you at this very moment. Do you hear Him? Are you listening?

I decided to listen for the voice of God. I asked God to speak to me in His gentle way. I reached out to Him in faith, trusting He would speak and I would hear. Let me emphasize that this was an action of faith because I asked God to speak to me and then I listened, believing that He would answer. I simply prayed, “Lord, I want to hear Your voice.” It only took a fraction of a second to realize that I had a response. However, the response I was given was not the response I expected.

I do not believe I am so righteous that God will speak to me. I believe, as the Bible says, “no one is righteous,” except for Jesus. However, because of my union and faith in Him, I did believe God would speak to me when I asked to hear His voice. However, it is less important to hear His voice than it is to respond to Him. I asked God to speak to me and what I heard sounded more like my own thoughts than anything else. Did God use my own inner voice to speak to me, or did I simply hear myself thinking? Either way, I believe God answered. When I prayed, “Lord, I want to hear Your voice,” the answer I immediately heard was, “are you willing to obey?”

That, of course, was the perfect response to my request. It took about three seconds to realize that, if I have to hesitate to answer God, then my answer is most likely to be “no,

I won't necessarily obey.” Startled by “his voice,” or rather by His answer, I found two truths which I hope will offer more additional insight.

First, if we are not willing to obey God, then why should He speak to us and offer His direction for our lives? The response I wanted to speak was, “if it is something that I want to do, then I will obey.” Here is the basis of the first truth: Christians are not volunteers. When God needs our service, He needs us to be willing to serve. To subjectively select how we are willing to serve God is not an option. If we are wanting to receive direction from God, then we must be willing to follow His direction without question.

Second, obedience is a matter of trust. The issue is not just whether I am willing to obey, but do I also trust God to empower me to do what He has asked? When God asks us to take an action, it is often one which does not make sense or appears to have any chance of success. That's how you know it is from God. God Himself, through our faith in Jesus, will make us capable for the task. He will give us the power and if necessary, “super ability” to accomplish whatever He asks.

Obedience is really a matter of cooperation. If we are willing to do our part, God will do His part. He will never fail to be faithful to us.

“O God, am I willing to hear Your voice? Am I willing to be obedient? Speak to me, and I will obey. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When God speaks, I will listen and obey!

- Thomas Duckworth -

NOTES:

Luke 11: 1-13

PERSISTENCE IN PETITION AND THANKSGIVING

A certain parable Jesus told came alive for me today. A certain neighbor, who is one egg short of an omelette, started ringing our doorbell at 7:30 this morning. Normally, that would have been late for us, but since it was after 1:00 a.m. before I went to bed, I was still enjoying my slumber. When I discovered who was at the door, I determined to ignore her. She has some of the craziest requests she makes of us and I just was not in the mood to deal with her. The only problem with that decision was that she kept ringing the doorbell. After several minutes of ringing, she knocked on the door for awhile before returning to use the bell. Finally, silence. I was up (who could sleep with that racket!) So I walked to the door to see if she had left. No such luck. She was standing on the porch talking to herself. I could not stand it any longer. She was not going to go away! Before she could ring the bell again I opened the door.

She had a message for me. The message was quite simple: “I just wanted you to know that my telephone is not working.”

“I’ll come down later and take a look at it,” I answered. Deliberately I took my time eating breakfast and reading the newspaper. When I went over, the problem was easily solved. She had her speaker phone turned on and could not make her earphone work. After pushing a little button, I returned home.

Jesus spoke of our persistence in prayer, citing a man who had a midnight visitor but nothing to feed him so he went to his neighbor to ask for bread. The neighbor gave him food because of his persistence. Had our neighbor not been persistent (stubborn!), I would not have helped her with her telephone dilemma. God wants us to be persistent (tenacious) in prayer. He wants us to keep bugging Him until we know He has an answer. My dear neighbor helped me relearn this lesson.

However, the saga still continues. Now that her telephone is working she keeps calling, insisting on paying me for “repairing” her phone. She won’t let me go to sleep tonight unless I accept her act of kindness! She will keep calling until I wear out!

Here again is a beautiful message. We may be persistent in prayer, but are we persistent in praise and gratitude when God answers our prayers? Would He not like it if we wore Him out with our grateful hearts? I discovered that I am too often quick to ask, but slow to thank.

“Lord, about my neighbor...”

“Help me to understand how much You love me, O my Father. You desire to give me all good gifts, yet I have been afraid to ask. I don’t mean to ‘bug’ You, but Your Word instructs me to keep on asking. Therefore, by faith I come to You again...”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God is true to His Word. He will do what He promises.

- Thomas Duckworth -

NOTES:

John 14: 1-14

ASKING WITH UNSELFISH MOTIVES

The remaking of the movie trilogy *Star Wars* has certainly created tremendous excitement. Yes, I am a *Star Wars* buff, and yes, I did attend the opening night exhibition this week. It was fascinating to watch people much younger than I stand and cheer during the added scenes and the enhanced effects.

A subsequent development of this movie is the marketing of *Star Wars* action figures. Taco Bell is promoting these toys with the purchase of a children’s taco or burrito meal (which certainly gives new meaning to the phrase, “May the force be with you”).

While dining at this less than five-star restaurant, admiring our new *Star Wars* toy, I overheard the voice of a child in the booth behind me. Of all the things to do at T.B., he was praying! This eager child’s mother was waiting at the counter to receive their food and he was reserving the booth. Sitting with his brothers or friends, I could hear him communicating with the Almighty God. His prayer went something like this: “Oh God, please let it be the action figure I want. Please God, let it be the one I want!”

Honestly, I did not quite know how to feel about this. It was cute, yet sad at the same time. Here is a child, so excited about a toy that he turns to God as if He were some kind of cosmic Santa Claus, and asks for a piece of molded plastic valued at \$1.49.

On this prayer alone, for this young man, the entire integrity of God is at stake. If he receives the toy for which he earnestly prayed, it reinforces the concept that God is there just to give us what we want. On the other hand, if he fails to receive the toy he wants, his conclusion would be that God is incapable of handling such a request, if there is a God at all! Either way, God loses.

I realize it is difficult to explain to young children that God desires for us to simply have a relationship with Him so we may enjoy Him. But children tend to grow into adults who often carry their childish concepts with them into adulthood. When is the last time you asked for a “thing” from God? Are you counting by minutes?

I wonder if God is amused or saddened when we, His children, come to Him in this way. My suspicion is that God is happy even when we come to Him like this child. He would much rather we come to Him misguided than not to come at all.

“...receive the kingdom of God like a little child...” (Mark 10: 15)

“As a child I approach You, heavenly Father...unafraid and bold. I know You are able to do anything I ask. Therefore, I ask that whatever I ask, it be for the glory of Your Son, Jesus, my Lord! Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God loves me for who I am. He accepts me just as I am. Therefore, I can be honest and real in my relationship with Him.

- Thomas Duckworth -

NOTES:

**Matthew 6: 25-31; Matthew 8: 23-27;
Matthew 14: 22-33; Matthew 16: 6-12**

FACETS OF FAITH - #1 LITTLE FAITH

In each of the above texts Jesus used the term “*O ye of little faith..*” The Greek for this term is oligopistos. To comprehend what Jesus was saying, it is necessary to read each scripture given.

Matthew 6: 25-31 (30). The Master made it clear, those who are content to possess little faith, will have problems with anxiety or worry. Worry is of Satan; never God. It is needless, useless and may be injurious to our well-being. Please read Philippians 4: 6 and I Peter 5: 7. Anxiety does not alter the past, but can drastically affect the present and future. Worry is blind, as it refuses to learn truth from God’s Holy Word.

Matthew 8: 23-27 (26) The disciples were with Jesus on the Sea of Galilee, when a great tempest arose. The ship was covered with waves and tossed to and fro. They were overwhelmed with fear. Christ was there, but was asleep. The word used here for fear means cowardly or timid; it is an inward sensation of fear. I recall moments of fear in my life which were totally groundless. The danger was more a matter of mind than reality. I believe Jesus is teaching us that FAITH in God minimizes our Fears. Many of us do not witness for Jesus, for fear of rejection.

Matthew 14: 22-33 (31) Fear created doubt in the minds of the disciples. Doubt cancels faith. The word for doubt in this text means, to separate oneself or to be in strife with oneself. ‘Do I trust God, Or Do I Doubt God?’ Doubt digs the grave of Faith. Doubts are more cruel than the worst of truths. Every step toward Christ kills a doubt.

Matthew 16: 6-12 (8 & 11) When Jesus spoke this time to the disciples, the fear factor now caused them a problem of forgetting past miracles Christ preformed. Jesus indicated their little faith had dwarfed their ability to recall the works of Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

‘Little Faith’ will keep us in the realm of Anxiety, Fear, Doubt and Forgetfulness.

Tomorrow, we will reach for Great Faith, and leave *little faith* behind.

“Father, help my faith to increase. Your Word tells me in Romans 10: 1 that *‘faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’*”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: As I read God’s word, and believe it to be true, I determine to reach for great and perfect faith.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

Matthew 15: 21-28; Luke 7: 1-10

FACETS OF FAITH - #2 GREAT FAITH

As believers, we want to leave *little faith* and ascent to Great Faith. As you read the above scripture, you will notice two different individuals seeking Christ’s help. One, a very poor woman, the other a man of great power. Jesus referred to both having great faith. There are three Greek words for “Great”. Jesus uses a word which means “large, of physical magnitude or measure.”

In Matthew 15: 25, we read about the poor Gentile woman who sought Jesus’ help for her demon possessed daughter. She worshiped Christ. The original text means crawl or crouch like a dog at the master’s feet. It also means to prostrate itself. One Greek translation puts it this way, “she fell on her knees and touched her forehead to the ground in profound reverence.” She humbled herself before Jesus, and received her request.

The second scripture tells us about a Roman Officer, whose servant was sick. He sent word for Jesus to come, believing that Jesus could heal him. As Jesus approached, the centurion sent word to the Master to come no farther. Say the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus did, and he was healed.

Jesus saw humility in both. Each came from different social status: one extremely poor, the other powerful. One compared herself to a dog. The other was in command over many. Social position was not the criterion for their great faith. They were different and yet similar. The characteristic both possessed was genuine humility. As I see it, humility and great faith go hand in hand.

Since God is the inspirer of all scripture, according to 2 Timothy 3: 16-17, Matthew and Luke used the exact word to describe humility. Therefore, I believe real humility is a vital step to great faith. God has been faithful, through His Word, to show believers steps to a deeper and more fulfilling life. It is found through prayer and in-depth Bible study.

Humility is not a profession made with the mouth. It is exemplified by the life we live. St. Augustine wrote: “Should you ask me: What is the first thing in religion? I would reply: The first, second and third thing therein is HUMILITY.”

Another important factor in the two individuals in our scriptures is Love. The woman deeply loved Jesus; the centurion sincerely loved his servant. Love and Humility move us toward great faith.

PRAYER AND AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Father in Heaven, I desire to have great faith. I am willing to walk the road of humility to achieve this level of faith.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

James 2: 14-25

FACETS OF FAITH - #3 PERFECT FAITH

We have left *little faith*, advanced to *great faith*, and now learn the way to *perfect faith*. Note in verse 22 the word *perfect* or *complete* faith. The Old Testament reference to James’ writing is found in Genesis 22: 3-14. The story tells of God’s command to His servant Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. This had to be the most difficult order any human had ever been asked to obey. It was in the context of this historical event that James, the brother of Jesus, credited Abraham of possessing *perfect* or *complete* faith. It is evident that *perfect faith* is the result of **OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S COMMANDS**.

Years ago a saint declared, “Even the true faith will die if we do not live in the spirit of **OBEDIENCE**.” I believe it is significant that forms of the word ‘obey’ appear more than 130 times in Scripture. Hebrews 5: 8 says that Christ, though a son, learned obedience through suffering. Before His death, Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father “*I have done that which you have given me to do.*” In Deuteronomy 11: 26-28 Moses informed the people if they did not obey, they would suffer a curse from God. If they were Obedient, God would **BLESS** them. If we read and study passages from the Old and New Testaments, we will understand why obedience to God is the path that leads to perfect or complete FAITH. Many translations use the term *perfect* faith. The original language uses a word which means *complete* faith. I interpret it thus: *Great faith* arrives at *perfect faith* via the route of complete obedience to our Lord.

Perhaps these quotations will enhance our devotion for today.

“Noting is really lost by a life of sacrifice; everything is lost by failure to obey God’s call.” Harry P. Liddon

“Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to Him.” Nathanael Emmons

“*If you love me, keep my commandments.*” Jesus Christ

I thrill at what even a little faith can accomplish. That thrill is magnified over and over when I realize God has made it possible for His adopted children to progress on to Great and Perfect Faith.

“Dear Savior, I praise You for a faith that can move mountains. I praise You for faith that sees me through the storms of life.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Through God’s eternal word I press toward great and perfect faith. May I be found faithful in every aspect of my life.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Tell why you think the following statement is an authentic (Biblically-supportable) statement: “The more consistent our obedience when we pray, the easier it becomes to hear God’s voice.” Is it your desire daily to pray the following prayer? “Holy Spirit, speak to me today.” How can you discern in your inner spirit when it is truly the Holy Spirit speaking to you?**
- 2. From your own experience of communion with God, tell if you ‘identify’ with the following statement: “One thing I have learned about the voice of God is that when God speaks, He whispers. To hear the gentle, guiding voice of God, we must listen for His quiet whisper.”**
- 3. Share your personal response (or reaction) to the following statements: “When God asks us to take an action, it is often one which does not make sense or appears to have any chance of success. That’s how you know it is from God. God Himself, through our faith in Jesus, will make us capable for the task. He will give us the power and if necessary, ‘super ability’ to accomplish whatever He asks.”**
- 4. Why do you think God desires for you (His child) to be tenacious and persistent in making your requests (prayers) known unto Him? (Matthew 6: 6)**
- 5. When God wonderfully answers your requests (prayers), do you persistently praise Him and express gratitude (thanks) to Him? Why is spending time in praise so very important in the development of a mature “Christian Walk”?**
- 6. How can you personally determine that your prayers are directed by unselfish motives? How can you personally discern that your prayers are offered for ‘the glory of God’ and for the ‘good of your fellow men’? When is it ‘right’ (proper) for a believer to ask God for ‘things’ which will personally benefit himself? When God’s answer to your prayers is “No’ or ‘Wait’, are these answers just as beneficial to you as when God’s answer to your prayer is ‘Yes’? Why or why not?**
- 7. Why, according to Matthew 6: 25-31, is worry needless and even hurtful?**
- 8. How can Faith in God’s person and power, help minimize your Fears? (Note Matthew 8: 23-27)**
- 9. What steps have you taken in your Christian life to deal with Doubt? (Note Matthew 14: 22-33)**

- 10. Do you believe that ‘humility’ and ‘great faith’ go hand-in-hand? Why? Does deep humility give birth to great love for God, which motivates one to place great confidence and trust and dependence in God?**
- 11. Tell if you agree with the following statement: “Even true faith will die if we do not live in the spirit of obedience.”**
- 12. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: “Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to Him.”**

CHAPTER THREE

CELEBRATE BENEFITS OF PRAYER

Proverbs 3: 5-6; James 5: 16

PRAY IN FAITH, BELIEVING

When our third child was ten days old, he started projectile vomiting, the milk shooting out of his stomach and bouncing off the wall. Frantically I called the doctor several days but he thought I was just a young mother who was over concerned. Not knowing what to do, I prayed. I finally took him to the emergency room. We were told that Daniel had pyloric stenosis; the opening out of the stomach was closed. He needed immediate surgery but he was dehydrated. If we had waited three more days, he would have died.

This started a frantic search for a surgeon to do the operation. The first one contacted demanded cash up front, which of course, we did not have. We decided that Bill should take the two older children and go to Good Friday Service he was conducting at the mountain church where he was interim pastor. “Ask the people to pray specifically for the right surgeon,” I implored.

Finally I called the doctor who had delivered my first baby. I had taught his son in first grade so we had become friends. He stated that he was sorry he did not perform those operations but would see what he could do. My job was to pray, to trust and to wait. Finally, the call came, “I have found a team to operate tomorrow and they are contributing their time.” I prayed, praising God.

The next day, the surgeon prayed with us before operating. We had never met him before, but we were delighted to discover he knew how to pray. Assuring us that he had done hundreds of these operations and that it would only take forty-five minutes, he left us in the waiting room.

However, we became concerned after an hour passed, so we prayed again. When an hour and a half passed, we were getting rather anxious, wondering what was happening. We prayed again, committing the operating staff and our precious baby into God’s hands. Two hours passed. The only thing we could do was to wait and pray, then trust God and the surgeon. Finally after two hours and forty five minutes, the doctor appeared and said, “Do you remember me praying that God would guide my hands?”

Yes, we did.

He then stated that he felt God directing him to cut diagonally, rather than horizontally as he always had. He was glad he did because he would not have been able to get at it, the bottom of the stomach was wrapped around the spinal cord. Although it took much longer than expected, the operation was a success. Coming out of the operating room, the baby reached up and pulled the I-V out of the vein in his forehead, as if to say, “I won’t be needing this anymore!”

The surgeon had prayed, then he listened and followed the guidance he received. How many times in life do we pray, then proceed to do a job in the same way we always have before?

From that experience, we learned the value of praying in faith, believing. We prayed, the church prayed, the nurses prayed, the surgeon prayed. Then we all rejoiced that God heard and answered our prayers.

“Thank you, Father, that you are a mighty God who hears and answers our prayers. Thank you for the people who love us and lift up our needs before you.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Believing that God has given us the opportunity to come before him with our petitions, let us appropriate this power of prayer.

- Laura Drewer -

NOTES:

John 15: 1-8

RECEIVING GOD’S POWER AND ENLIGHTENMENT

We never fully appreciate power until we lose it. A tremendous power outage covered most of the western states this week, and, although I did not feel the effects of the shortage, thousands of people were inconvenienced by it. Watching news coverage made me realize how connected we are in this great land. One power plant in California triggered a chain reaction of electrical surges at other power plants throughout seventeen states. Power on which we depend can be wiped out in an instant because of some glitch hundreds of miles away.

The power of electricity is awesome and incomprehensible. We daily depend upon this power, and as I said earlier, we do not give it much regard until we lose it. If we lost our ability to generate electricity, we would find a way to survive, but it would be difficult.

While talking about this experience, I was drawn to the realization that ultimate power belongs to God. He is “all powerful,” or as we say in old liturgy, “God is Omnipotent!” Like the power I need to operate this computer comes from a large generator, the power I need to live comes from the One who generates all power. The little black cord which plugs into the wall is the channel through which the power from the generator reaches my keyboard. The channel through which I receive power from God is called prayer.

Is there a power shortage in your life? Are you plugged into God and receiving from Him the grace you need every day? Some of us are “wind-up” believers. When we need some extra help from God, we wind-up our prayer life just enough to get us through the crisis. Some of us are solar-powered Christians, enjoying the fullness of God as long as life is bright and cheery, but when dark clouds roll by, we lose our energy. Some of us are battery-powered Christians. Having stored our faith in some past experience, we find that the charge we once had is too soon drained. But those who are plugged in and turned onto God find the power they need is available to them in abundance, regardless of life’s circumstances.

A person who neglects to pray is like a lamp which is never turned on. They both sit in darkness and are void of power. Don’t be like the lifeless lamp. Get turned on to God. Get plugged into the power of prayer and stay “current.”

“I believe in You. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You are the source of all creation and You hold all things together. Lord Jesus, allow me the joy of experiencing Your power. Allow me the privilege of entering into Your presence with my prayer...”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The time has come to cease talking about prayer and start praying.

- Thomas Duckworth -

NOTES:

1 Peter 1: 3-9

PRAYER IS SIMPLY TALKING TO JESUS!

A man’s daughter had asked the local pastor to come and pray with her father. When the pastor arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed. The pastor assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. “I guess you were expecting me,” he said. “No, who are you?” “I’m the new associate at your local church,” the pastor replied. “When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up.” “Oh yeah, the chair,” said the bedridden man. “Would you mind closing the door?” Puzzled, the pastor shut the door. “I’ve never told anyone this, not even my daughter,” said the man. “But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it always went right over my head. I abandoned any attempt at prayer,” the old man continued, “until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, ‘Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here’s what I suggest: Sit down on a chair; place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It’s not spooky because he promised, “I’ll be with you always.” Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you’re doing with me right now.’ So, I tried it and I’ve liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I’m careful, though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she’d either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm.”

The pastor was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, and returned to the church. Two nights later the daughter called to tell the pastor that her daddy had died that afternoon. “Did he seem to die in peace?” he asked. “Yes, when I left the house around two o’clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange, in fact, beyond strange – really weird. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside the bed.”

“Jesus, help me to realize that, although I cannot see you with my physical eyes, you are ‘more real’ than anyone or anything else in the Universe! O Jesus, you are not merely a past hero in history to be admired, but you are a living divine Person to be loved and worshiped. ‘Jesus, Lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly, while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high; Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past; Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last!’”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Though unseen, Jesus is not unknown. Because His power is unlimited, His love unwavering, and His wisdom incomparable, I will cast all

my cares on Him, knowing that He cares for me! Now I shall live with joy unspeakable, and then someday I shall die undisturbed as I lay my head in the lap of Jesus!

**(Author of story is unknown)
(Prayer and Affirmation by Ron Christian)**

NOTES:

Psalm 42: 1-11

UNINHIBITED THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE!

When Jesus taught that we must be like a child in order to enter the Kingdom of God, I believe he had my wife’s cousin’s three-year-old son in mind. At his birthday party he was delighted to inform everyone that it was his birthday and he was “free” years old. Before partaking of the barbecue dinner, D.J.’s dad offered a prayer for him which went something like this:

Dad: “Our heavenly Father, we thank You for these past three years and all you have done for us in good times and bad...”

D.J.: “And for the bike.”

Dad: “We thank you that you have given us such a good son, and thank you for our family and friends...”

D.J.: “And for the bike.”

Dad: “We thank you for the meal we are about to eat...”

D.J.: “AND THE BIKE.”

Dad: “and for the bike... Amen.”

The shining new bicycle which was parked in the driveway was the focus of the day. Although mom and dad paid for the bike, this young boy recognized where the gift truly came from. He was deeply awed at the greatness of this gift. He was thankful and he wanted God to know it! This young child of God was not one bit hesitant to give thanks where thanks was due.

I wondered whether I give thanks to God with such enthusiasm. I know it has been a long time since I did! That bicycle was such a simple little gift, yet it meant the world to this happy child. When was the last time I gave thanks to my God for the simple joys He brings to me? When was the last time I just blurted out from my heart, “Thanks for the _____ God”?

It is this kind of child-like excitement which excites God. He told us in His Word to be like little children and to receive all of His precious gifts with effervescent appreciation. Look into life with awe and see the mysteries of God revealed openly. He will stir your heart with gratitude!

Here are some suggestions I would like to make in order to help you see life again like a little child. Stick your nose in the grass and watch the tiny bugs crawl along the earth. Drive away from the city lights some night and count the stars (don’t stop until you reach 1,000). Gaze intently into the eyes of someone you love. Watch a child play a game. Join that child in the game.

What a great lesson I learned from this “birthday boy.” I am truly thankful. Tonight when I lay my sleepy head on my pillow, I will whisper, “Thank you, God, for the exciting message you revealed to me today...And for the bike!”

“Lord, I have taken Your many blessings for granted. I have even come to expect them without asking. Forgive my lack of zeal when I pray. And grant that, when I pray, I will acknowledge your steadfast faithfulness to me.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will praise Thee, O God. I exalt Thy name. I acknowledge Thee to be the Lord!

- Thomas Duckworth -

NOTES:

Joshua 14: 10-12; Psalm 78: 41; Matthew 7: 7-8

WHAT COULD GOD DO WITH A CHURCH FULL OF “CALEBS”?

“Give me this mountain”. “As my strength was then, so is my strength now...” Can you imagine an 85 year old man wanting to climb a mountain? Caleb did! “Impossible”, you say? Matthew 17: 20 says, “*Nothing shall be impossible unto you*”. In Matthew 19: 26, Jesus said, “*With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible*”! Consider the title again: What could God do with a church full of “Calebs”?

While pastoring a church in Central California, we discovered we needed more room. Our funds were limited, but we believed that Nothing Was Impossible with God. The people prayed, asking God for the impossible. There was an empty lot next door to the church. It seemed perfect, however the owner refused to sell. Believing this was God’s will, several “Calebs” walked over the property, claiming it in the Name of Jesus. Not only did the owner reconsider, he sold it for a reasonable price. Now, we needed a building.

Some old army barracks were being auctioned in a neighboring town. Men from our church were elected to look into buying one. Our representative was out-bid each time until the last building was offered. His bid was so low, we wondered if it would even be considered. Ours was the only bid submitted. We now owned a building - rather, two buildings. The barracks we purchased was so long, we had to cut it in half. *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Romans 8: 31.

The day those buildings arrived was a time of rejoicing. The community, however, was not quite so excited. They couldn’t imagine what we intended to do with those ugly old barracks. God makes “*all things beautiful in His time*”. After we remodeled, they were beautiful. The community was pleased. One building stood next to the church on the main street of town. It consisted of two offices, two restrooms, and plenty of Sunday school classrooms. The other was located behind the church. It was transformed into a kitchen and fellowship hall. The community responded favorably, and the Mayor of the town participated in the Dedication Service.

There are still Calebs today, asking God for the “Impossible”. If you have needs, try praying, walking or climbing, if necessary, but claim the “Impossible”.

“Dear Jesus, I believe, help Thou my unbelief.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will close my eyes to the impossible and look to the God of possibilities. I will not limit the Holy One of Israel.

- Lowell Weller -

Proverbs 3: 5-6

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

My husband returned early from painting a house, complaining of pain in his shoulder. Thinking it was from lifting the equipment and painting above his head, he took an aspirin and laid down. After eating a sandwich, he said the pain was very severe so I called the doctor. He suggested that we go to St. Peteris Hospital, 45 miles way, in Olympia.

We started out in a light shower that soon turned into a drenching deluge. I murmured that I did not like to drive in the rain and I complained that I certainly did not want to get on the freeway. I prayed aloud, “Lord, go with us,” then we entered the freeway. The windshield wipers were dispensing rain to the east and west, yet I had trouble seeing. I griped.

Suddenly, over the side of the car there appeared a beautiful little rainbow coming up from the street and resting on the hood. “Look, Bill,” I explained, “God sent us a rainbow!” Then Bill replied, “Look, Laura, there is also a rainbow on my side, resting on the hood.” That rainbow stayed with us all the way down I-5.

When we arrived, Bill was taken into the emergency room and I was left alone in the waiting room. I was exuberant with the warmth of God’s presence, yet I was very cold and deeply concerned about my husband.

Finally, after two hours, a nurse informed me that Bill was being admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. A large blood clot had been discovered and he had indeed suffered a heart attack. She told me to go home as it would probably take all night to dissolve the bloodclot. I was overwhelmed with guilt. Why had I driven him to the hospital instead of calling an ambulance? Could this have been prevented if I had called 911 immediately when he first arrived home? I plummeted to the depths of despair.

Driving home alone in the dark, through the rain and fog, I was overwhelmed with doubt, fear and grief. We had just celebrated our 40th anniversary with a trip to Victoria. We had thought about going there when we were first married but we only had \$45 and that was the amount for the rent. Now was I going to lose him? I had seen my father die of a heart attack when I was only twelve and that memory was as fresh as yesterday. I questioned and doubted if I had been a good wife.

Driving up over the last hill, the rain and fog dissipated and a full moon appeared out of the clouds. Then three deer dashed in front of my car, stopped on the side of the road and stared at me. “Yes, God, I know you are still in control. You are the great Creator of that shiny moon and this beautiful earth. You made those deer and tonight you

protected them. You made Bill and me, and I know we are in your hands. You sent us those miniature rainbows earlier to assure us of your presence. Forgive me for not trusting you completely.” Then I started singing, “One day at a time, sweet Jesus, that’s all I am asking of you...please teach me to take one day at a time.”

“Dear Lord, thank you for revealing yourself through your creation when I doubt and worry. Thank you for the reminder that you care for my every pain.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God controls the universe and He reveals it in beautiful ways at unexpected times.

- Laura Drewer -

NOTES:

Mark 14: 36; Romans 8: 15; Galatians 4: 6-7

PRAYER STYLE CHANGED - WONDERFUL RESULTS

It started with dizziness! Nothing seemed to help! Physicians were unable to find the cause. Several months later I had a heart attack! The main artery, leading to my heart, was 99% blocked. The arteries on the left and right had blockages also. After 10 angiograms and 5 stent implants, a quadruple by-pass was preformed. I probably would not have survived without these procedures. I thank the Lord and the doctors for saving my life.

As I studied the above Scriptures, I believe God revealed truth to me. I have read, from Bible scholars, that Abba Father means “Daddy.” I tried calling, “Daddy, Daddy”, when I did not feel well. The chest pain and headaches subsided. The Lord led me to Philippians 4: 6 “...by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.” The phrase, with thanksgiving, spoke to me. I began including “praise”, with my petitions. The result? I felt better, slept less, and worked more.

According to Mark 14: 36, Abba Father reveals intimacy; a closeness between God, the Father, and Christ, His Son. Romans 8: 15 says “I have been adopted into God’s family and need not live in bondage again.” Galatians 4: 6-7 reveals I am no longer a slave, but a son. I am an heir of God through Christ. What a difference since I began praying “Abba Father” or “Daddy, Daddy”, coupled with “Thanksgiving. I cannot prove this method of prayer, theologically. I only know it is working for me. Life is now worth living.

Archbishop Trench wrote: “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness”.

“Abba Father, Daddy, Daddy, I want to say ‘Thanks’ for truth that is adding joy and meaning to my life.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will look seriously into the duties and privileges of God’s Son-ship. Every prayer and petition I will offer thanksgiving.

- Lowell Weller -

Notes:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Share a time (occasion) in your life when you realized that God had dramatically and decisively answered your prayer, through divine empowerment and intervention.**
- 2. What is the ‘channel’ (or ‘channels’) by which you personally receive the ‘power of God’ which enables you to live a victorious Christian life? Have you ever experienced a ‘power surge’ in your spiritual life? How did you become aware of such a ‘power surge’, and what steps did you take to ‘solve’ this serious problem in your spiritual life? How do you (as a believer) stay ‘plugged’ into God in order that you may receive from Him the grace which you need every day?**
- 3. From your own experience (or from the experience of friends whom you know rather well) share ways in which you have sought to make the “presence of Christ” more real in your life of prayer (similar to the old man in the ‘devotional’ who placed an empty chair in front of him to visualize Jesus sitting on the chair).**
- 4. In your ‘prayer life’, are you increasingly learning to become ‘childlike’ in your prayers (i.e., are you learning to become uninhibited and unselfconscious and exuberant in your praise and thanksgiving to God for the ‘simple joys’ He brings to you)?**
- 5. What can you do to intensify your zeal and enthusiasm and fervency during your ‘prayer times’? Is it true that when you ‘act enthusiastic’ , you will eventually ‘feel enthusiastic’?**
- 6. Have you personally, or has your church corporately, received an answer to prayer that (from a ‘human viewpoint’) seemed to be ‘Impossible’?**
- 7. Can you think of a time (occasion) in your life when, during a personal or family crisis, you sensed the reassuring presence of God very near to you? Did God use a ‘material object’ or the ‘words of an individual’ or a ‘wonder of nature’ to remind you of His powerful presence and tender love?**
- 8. Is it possible for you (as a believer) to approach God with great intimacy, and at the same time to maintain an attitude of profound reverence and awe and ‘holy fear’?**
- 9. Tell to what degree you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness.”**

CHAPTER FOUR

RELISH '*PERKS*' OF FAITH

Romans 10: 17; Hebrews 11: 1 & 6

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS “PERKS” - (Part 1)

We often hear the word ‘perks’. The word means “benefits above what is normally expected”. ‘Precious’ means ‘of great price or value’. The Apostle Peter writes “*To them that have obtained precious faith*”. 2 Peter 1:1.

In perusing God’s Word, I have discovered many *perks* God gives to those whose faith is in Him. One needs to know that the Greek word for faith and believe are the same. Let us prayerfully observe a few heavenly *perks*. I encourage you to take time to read each scripture as we look into faith’s extra benefits.

In Hebrews 4: 3, the word for REST means ‘cessation from labor’ or ‘relaxing’. There is coming a time when we will rest from our labors here on earth. Precious faith enables us to rest or relax here on earth. It amazes me when I read about heroes of faith who relaxed in the face of danger and death. Stephen is a prime example. He relaxed in his faith in God even as he faced death. No doubt he had the assurance of the truth in Revelations 14: 13, and the words of Jesus found in Matthew 11: 28-30.

“Resting on the faithfulness of Christ our Lord! Resting on the fulness of His own sure Word! Resting on His wisdom, on His love and power! Resting on His covenant, from hour to hour resting and believing, let us onward press; Resting on Himself, the Lord of Righteousness! Resting and rejoicing, let the saved one sing: Glory, glory, glory unto Christ our King.” (Anonymous)

“Come here to me, all who are growing weary to the point of exhaustion, and who have been loaded with burdens and are bending beneath their weight, and I alone will cause you to cease from your labor and take away burdens and thus refresh you with rest.” (Matthew 11: 28. Greek Expanded Translation)

“Heavenly Father, I want the kind of Faith that causes me to rest in Your Word. I may not understand it all, but by Faith I will trust You.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Realizing that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, I determine to read and study that I may achieve precious faith.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

I Peter 1: 8; John 15: 9-11; Romans 10: 17

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS ‘PERKS’ - (Part 2)

The second ‘perk’ is JOY! Jesus said “...*that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*” (John 15: 11) One way to assure us of His joy, is having faith in God. Believing and faith come from the same Greek word. Some translations use the word believing, while others use faith; they mean the same. Searching the scriptures, I discovered that joy means more than being happy or glad. It appears to be an emotion that brings a far greater satisfaction. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus desires “our joy to be full” or complete.

As a Christian, I have long known it was important to have faith. However, since studying the *Perks* of Faith, I am more aware that Faith in God and His word is an absolute necessity. Faith is the springboard to other aspects of the believer’s life. A chorus says it this way: “If you want joy, real joy, wonderful you, Let Jesus come into your heart, Your sins He’ll wash away, your night He’ll turn to day, Your life He’ll make it over anew”. This affirms the words written by the Apostle Paul: “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not by works, so that no one can boast.*” (Ephesians 2: 5, NIV)

Real joy is not contingent upon materialistic things. There are those who have great wealth, yet are void of real joy. On the mission fields, I have seen many poverty-stricken Christians full of real joy, wonderful joy. True joy is not dependent upon our conditions. Jesus is the only One who can truly give us joy.

I appreciate the following quotes:

“Joy is the echo of God’s life within us”. Joseph Marmion

“Joy is distinctly a Christian word and a Christian thing, only Jesus gives that joy.” S.D. Gordon

The Bible gives us the formula for real joy. I have listed two. You may wish to search your Bible for others.

Joy comes from Christian Fellowship with unity.	Philippians 2: 2 & Philippians 4: 1
Joy comes from Soul Winning.	I Thessalonians 2: 19 & 20

“Lord Jesus, grant my faith to increase, that I may have Your fullness of joy.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: As I walk with you, Lord, I will not seek fame or fortune. I seek your “joy, real joy, wonderful joy”.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

2 Peter 1: 1; Romans 10: 17; Hebrews 11: 1&6

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS “PERKS” - (Part 3)

Our third *perk* is Hope. Hebrews 11: 1 says it this way, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” It takes no stretch of the imagination to see that hope is a *perk*, or extra benefit of Faith. The word Hope, has a much greater meaning in the Greek language than in the English language. Our English word means a wish that may or may not come true. The New Testament Greek word, *elpis*, means a firm, well-grounded expectation. When Christians speak of the Hope of Eternity, it is based on truth from a truthful God. (John 14: 1-3 and Titus 1: 2)

I have heard people wishfully say, “I hope my sins are forgiven”, or “I hope I will go to heaven when I die.” According to John 1: 12, we have assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are children of God. “*Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ*”. (Galatians 4: 7) Therefore, a weak, but growing hope becomes a firm expectation.

I want to challenge you to prayerfully read the following scriptures: Romans 15: 4; Romans 15: 13; Colossians 1: 27; and Hebrews 6: 19.

**“Life with Christ is an endless hope, without Him a hopeless end.”
Anonymous**

“When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God.” C.K. Allen

“*Hope maketh not ashamed. Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” Apostle Paul.

A psychologist asked several persons this question: “What do you have to hope for”? Over ninety percent said “they were simply enduring the present while they waited for the future.” Some were waiting for something to happen...Some waited for “next year”. Others were waiting for better times while some waited for someone to die. Some were waiting for “tomorrow.” Apparently they did not realize that today is all we have and we are not even sure of the whole day. Yesterday is gone, and tomorrow may never come. The hope God gives is not wishful hoping. It is a firm expectation, promised by a Faithful God.

“Dear Heavenly Father, when doubts come, help me to remember that I have a Firm, Solid Expectation.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I put my hope in you and your word. Your word is truth.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

Romans 10: 17; 2 Timothy 3: 10; Hebrews 6: 12

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS ‘PERKS’ - (Part 4)

We now come to the fourth *perk* of faith, which is patience. Most of us can use more patience. The scriptures in 2 Timothy and Hebrews connect faith and patience. The importance of faith is evident as we read God’s Holy Word. “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*” (Romans 10: 17) The Greek word for patience and longsuffering is the same. It literally means to “abide under”. This suggests the need of endurance, fortitude, steadfastness or perseverance.

Which of the above virtues would you consider less important? Are they not all necessary in our Christian life? If this is true, then we must be in God’s Word in order to increase our faith. As I studied, I was elated to discover so many wonderful *perks* that accompany our faith in God.

The Greek word for patience is *hupomone*. Chrysostom calls *hupomone* “A root of all goods, mother of piety, a fruit that never withers, a harbor that knows no storms, and a fortress that is never taken.” Others suggest that God-given patience can transmute the hardest trial into glory; and it is a quality that keeps us on our feet, and our face to the adverse winds of life. May God increase my faith so that I can enjoy the *perk* of patience.

I do not know who wrote the following, but I know it is true and reminds me that I need patience.

“Not so in haste, my heart; have faith in God and wait; although He linger long, He never comes too late.”

I am confident that the Bible has the solution to our lack of longsuffering. If we have great faith in God, and His Word, patience will increase. It is a *perk*, and it comes by faith. James 1:5 reminds me that God gives wisdom liberally to those who ask. He also gives other blessings and *perks* if we ask in faith.

“Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. Give me the desire to study Your Word, ‘for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.’”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I purpose to read God’s Word daily that my faith may increase.

- Lowell Weller -

I John 5: 1-5

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS ‘PERKS’ - (Part 5)

We came now to consider the 5th perk through faith: the perk of Victory. In every kind of contest, the combatants have entered TO WIN, not just to have fun. Since I was a little boy, I have loved competition. I always wanted to win. My intention was more than overcoming my opponent. I entered with the intention of being the winner. I relate to the above text, because it deals with each of us, being overcomers. The word faith, or believeth, appears three times in these five verses. To me, victorious living is one of the “perks” of faith.

We have all faced temptations. As a result to yielding to temptation, I knew I had failed, and I was the loser. “It was my fault and I had no one else to blame.” Conquering faith is a strong belief in Jesus Christ, and I had not possessed it. I felt worse than when I lost a ball game. But I remember when I refused to yield to Satan. I felt as if I had just pitched a “no-hitter.”

When our faith is in Christ, and we aren’t doubting God or His Word, it is easier to resist Satan’s attacks and lures to worldliness. When I yielded, I was disappointed in myself, not God. As a soldier, I turned my back on the Lord. I deeply regret the way I lived while overseas. I did not lose my faith in God. I knew if He would have mercy on me, when I returned, I would ask His forgiveness. For that reason, I resisted the temptations to fall into deep sin. That was more than forty years ago. I am so thankful that my faith in God enables me now to be the Christian I am today. Although I didn’t deserve a second chance, God in His mercy, gave it to me. Each day takes me closer to the end of my physical life, but brings me closer to my eternal life with God, the Father.

More than ever, I am convinced that there is a faith in God which enables us to be a Victor! We can be overcomers of all that the world has to offer. I truly believe what I have written. If I didn’t, I, of all people, would be the most miserable!

“Again, my prayer is: ‘Lord, I believe, please help my unbelief.’”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I know that faith is the victory that overcomes the world, therefore I walk by faith today.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

Hebrews 11: 1- 8

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS ‘PERKS’ - (Part 6)

The more I study God’s Word, and realize the many *perks* that are ours through Faith, the more excited I become. The scripture for today reveals Abraham’s great faith, due to his obedience. This is our sixth *perk*. The Bible gives approximately 125 references to words relating to obedience. According to Deuteronomy 11: 27, God promises “A Blessing” if we obey Him. It will be very beneficial to read the following scriptures: Exodus 20: 6; Deuteronomy 5: 29; John 14: 23-24 and John 15: 10.

I Samuel 15: 22 enlightens a great truth. “Behold to obey is better than sacrifice.” I witnessed this as a chaplain for the Police Dept. When motorists were in a hurry, there was a penalty to pay. I remember one fine issued. It amounted to several hundred dollars. My translation of the above scripture is, “to obey is better than to pay.”

I am amazed when I hear Christian and non-Christian people say that God’s ways and laws are hard to obey. I read in I John 5: 3, NIV “*This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome.*” The Amplified Bible adds these words, irksome, oppressive or grievous.

Aristotle said, “Wicked men obey out of fear, good men from love.” N. Emmons said, “Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to Him.”

As we read the book of Hebrews, it is evident that those who enjoyed the *perk* of obedience, were men and women of faith. Their faith enabled them to obey the voice of God usually without a question or doubt. That’s real faith! In Genesis 26: 1-5, God blessed Abraham and his descendants “*because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements.*” Obedience is a necessary response to faith. Since the wind and waves obey Christ, shouldn’t we who love Him, also obey Him?

“Dear God, I have asked before, but ask again. ‘Please increase my faith’. So that without hesitation, I will obey you!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I know faith comes from reading God’s Word. I am determined to read it more often, seeking to obey whatever it commands.

- Lowell Weller -

Galatians 5: 6; Ephesians 6:23; I Thessalonians 3: 6

PRECIOUS FAITH AND ITS ‘PERKS’ - (Part 7)

The seventh *perk* of faith is Love. God’s Word reveals that LOVE is vital to our relationship with Him and His children. The Apostle Paul wrote about faith in Christ Jesus, love of the saints, and the hope which is laid up for us in heaven. (Colossians 1: 4&5) In Henry Drummond’s book, “The Greatest Thing In The Word,” he wrote about the power and greatness of Love: “Instead of allowing yourself to be unhappy, just let your love grow as God wants it to grow, seek goodness in others, love more persons more.” Anonymous writers wrote, “Love is the fire of life; it either consumes or purifies.” “Love is more than a characteristic of God; it is His character.” “Love is the only service that power cannot command and money cannot buy.” “Love seeks not limits, but outlets.” “Love rules without a sword. Love binds without a cord.” In Romans 13: 10, Paul wrote, “Love is the fulfilling of the law”.

Galatians 5: 6 *“...but Faith which worketh by Love.”*
Ephesians 6: 23 *“...and Love with Faith.”*

I have known many Christians who had great faith. They were people who genuinely loved others. The following story serves as a reminder to me, that love is a wonderful *perk* of faith.

As a young pastor, I was eager to see people won to Christ, and yes, get them into my church. My associate, who had lived a very sinful life prior to coming to the Lord, enjoyed witnessing to people. We spent hours together, calling on the sick, needy and unsaved. One day while visiting, the associate, a friend, and I visited the home of an alcoholic. The house was in shambles. Tobacco juice was down his shirt and on the floor, rather than the intended can. He smelled of alcohol. It was a repulsive sight and I wanted to leave. The other men, full of love and faith, reached out and put their arms around him. They shared their love for Christ and assured him that Christ loved and died for him also. As we left, I asked how they could touch a man like that. Their answer was, “We’ve been there! We know what it’s like.” They both had been delivered by the love and grace of God, and knew only love and grace could deliver him. *The faith they showed that day was through love. I had learned a lesson.*

“Dear God, how thankful I am that true faith has tremendous *perks*. I desire more unconditional love.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I know that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, therefore, I intend to read and study Your Word more.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. According to Matthew 11: 28-30, what does Jesus promise to those persons who place their trust in Him and who willingly accept Jesus’ ‘Yoke’?**
- 2. How do you distinguish between ‘pleasure’ and ‘joy’? Is it possible for a believer to experience ‘joy’ amidst sorrow, loss, disappointment, illness? Why or why not? (Note Galatians 5: 22)**
- 3. According to Philippians 2:2; 4: 1 and I Thessalonians 2: 19-20, from whence does joy come?**
- 4. Who (or what) is the Christian’s ‘object of hope’, and why does such ‘hope’ give a believer a ‘firm and well-grounded expectation’? (Note Hebrews 6: 19; John 14: 1-3; Titus 1: 2; Galatians 4: 7; Romans 15: 4; Romans 15: 13; Colossians 1: 27)**
- 5. Share your response (or reaction) to the following statement: “Life with Christ is an endless hope, without Him a hopeless end.”**
- 6. Do you believe that these are no hopeless situations in life, only people who have grown hopeless about those situations? When you face a difficult situation and, as a result, your faith wavers and your hope diminishes, what can you do to stimulate your faith and to enliven your hope?**
- 7. From a Biblical point of view, how would you describe the virtue of ‘Patience’? (Note Romans 5: 1-5; Hebrews 6: 12; 10: 35-36)**
- 8. According to I John 5: 4-5, what is the ‘Key’ to experiencing a victorious Christian life?**
- 9. According to I John 5: 3, what is the best way to demonstrate (‘prove’) that one truly loves God?**
- 10. List some of the benefits which persons receive when they obey God’s commandments? (Read Exodus 20: 6; Deuteronomy 5: 29; John 14: 23-24; 15: 10)**
- 11. Choose one of the following statements which describes ‘Christian Love’, and share your insight and interpretation and applications of the statement which you choose:**

- a. **“Love is the fire; it either consumes or purifies.”**
 - b. **“Love is more than a characteristic of God; it is His character.”**
 - c. **“Love is the only service that power cannot command and money cannot buy.”**
 - d. **“Love seeks not limits, but outlets.”**
 - e. **“Love rules without a sword. Love binds without a cord.”**
 - f. **“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”**
 - g. **“You may give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.”**
 - h. **“Love is able to go down, down, down, where human beings are hurting, to lift them up to God.”**
 - i. **“Love sees beyond the obvious marrings of sin in peoples’ lives, and is able to ‘see’ the potential for greatness in degenerate people because of the transforming power of God.”**
12. **From your own personal experience, and from Scriptural teachings, demonstrate that the following statement concisely describes the ‘secret’ to successful living: “Instead of allowing yourself to be unhappy, just let your love grow as God wants it to grow, seek goodness in others, love more persons more.”**