Christian Ministry and Training

Establishing an Effective Prayer Life

By Gerald Rowlands

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About the Author

During a ministry spanning 50 years, **Gerald Rowlands** of Australia ministered in approximately 70 countries, serving in a wide range of roles including Pastor, Evangelist, Missionary, Christian Radio Teacher, and Bible College Lecturer and Principal. Alongside his wife Elizabeth, Gerald lived and ministered in various parts of the world, including Africa, Asia, and Israel.

Gerald was the founder and president of *Church Planting International (CPI)*. The notes in this book were originally part of the CPI Training Course, designed for prospective church planters and ministry leaders. This course has been used in more than 23 nations, equipping thousands of pastors and leaders around the world.

His vision for CPI was born in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1980, although the seeds were planted earlier. In 1975, during his first year in Africa, Gerald led numerous large-scale evangelistic crusades, where many "decisions for Christ" were made. However, he quickly realised that the real challenge came after the crusades—integrating new believers into church communities and helping them live out a Christian lifestyle. This deepened his conviction about the urgent need to train local pastors in the principles of church planting and church growth.

In response, Gerald began organising pastors' seminars throughout Africa. In 1979, he established a Bible College in what was then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), acquiring an old guest house/motel and launching a one-year training course that later developed into the full CPI Course. Through follow-up visits and continued training, the CPI Course was embraced by 27 denominations across Zimbabwe. It played a central role in a national church planting initiative known as *TARGET 2000*, which saw hundreds of new churches established each year, even in the face of severe national hardship.

Beyond Zimbabwe, CPI was adopted in other African nations including Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Swaziland, South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria, and Namibia. In 1992, Gerald received what he called a "Macedonian Call" from Southeast Asia. While based in Singapore, he introduced the CPI Course to over 30 Bible Colleges across Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. He also hosted pastors' conferences to promote the training and distribute materials to local leaders.

Gerald's training resources have been translated into more than a dozen languages and used in Bible colleges in India, China, Israel, and across the former USSR—including Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Siberia, and Russia. While exact numbers are difficult to determine, it is widely believed that tens of thousands of students have completed training using Gerald's materials, resulting in the planting of hundreds of churches and the transformation of countless lives.

In recognition of his global ministry impact, Gerald was awarded the *Order of Australia Medal (OAM)* by the Australian Government in 2006 for his service to developing nations. Even in his late 70s, Gerald continued to minister through a regular Christian radio program, focusing on biblical teaching about God's plan in the end times.

Gerald went to be with the Lord in 2021 at the age of 86, leaving behind a legacy that continues to bear fruit across the nations.

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Lord, teach us to pray

Prayer is as essential to our spiritual life as breathing is to our natural life. We cannot live effectively for God without a healthy prayer life and we certainly cannot be effective in any kind of ministry without a consistent prayer life.

1. Defining the indefinable - what is prayer?

As we begin to share some of the simple basic principles of prayer, let me confess from the outset that there are some things about prayer which I believe will remain a mystery until we finally arrive in the immediate presence of God, when the Bible teaches that ***"we shall know, even as we also are known."***

1 Cor. 13:12 (KJV)

"…but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Although we may understand many things about prayer and can teach many wonderful truths on this intriguing subject, some of the deeper aspects and the more difficult questions seem to have no satisfactory answer this side of eternity. I am sure that every child of God has some questions to ask of God concerning the mysteries of prayer and of some prayers which appear to remain unanswered.

Nevertheless we know sufficient to enable us to establish and exercise an effective and fruitful prayer life which will enable us to love and serve God to the fullest extent of our abilities.

a) Prayer is essentially a spiritual activity.
It is the expression of our spirit to God who is a Spirit. It is the joining and merging of our spirit with His. It is a glorious meeting and intermingling of our spirit and His. It is the sacred communing of kindred spirits - our spirit man, communing and speaking intimately with the Spirit of God, and He with us. I wish I could emphasise this truth to ensure that you thoroughly understand and appreciate it.

Prayer is not an intellectual activity. True prayer is not the product of our human mind or intellectual faculties, though our minds and thoughts should certainly be involved in the exercise. It is the joining of our spirit with God's in the creative activity of mutual spiritual communion.

Our spirit is the centre of our being. It is the God-conscious part of man. We are essentially and primarily spiritual beings, housed in physical bodies and operated by our mental faculties. Unless your spirit meets with God, to commune with Him and He with you, you have not prayed.

b) Prayer is "Drawing near to God."

James. 4:8 (NKJV)

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

In prayer we come aside from all the activities of life and focus our complete attention on to the Lord. It is an act of deliberately withdrawing from everything which requires and demands our attention in order to spend time with God. This is sometimes extremely difficult for people in ministry, for we may reason that our whole life is dedicated to God's work and that the things which demand our attention are legitimately in His interests. It is sadly possible to be so busily engaged in the work of God that we appear to have little or no time in which to be with God. This is a very subtle and extremely dangerous trap into which many well meaning ministers fall. It is an "occupational hazard" of the ministry in which we become so busy in the work of God that we seriously neglect the personal worship of God. We spend so much time serving God, that we appear to have no time to fellowship with Him.

c) Prayer is spending quality time with God.

Effective prayer can never be achieved in a hurry. Obviously there are extreme moments when prayer can become effectively operative in a mini second of time. There are occasions when we may cry to God in a sudden crisis and He hears and answers prayer as quickly as we can cry out to Him. But, as a general rule the exercise of prayer requires time and should not be hurried. For prayer is not so much what we say to God, as what He may want to say to us and what he may want to accomplish in us as we come before Him in the attitude of surrender and submission which true prayer demands. Personal Prayer is so important that we should put it at the top of any list of priorities we may make. Its importance is such that almost every other activity should be placed beneath it in the order of the priorities we establish.

d) Prayer is a two-way conversation.

The most frequent misunderstanding which people have about prayer is the idea that "Prayer is talking to God." This is a dangerous idea because it is partly true, yet not the whole truth. Obviously one aspect, and an important one, is that of talking with God. But the other side of the equation is that prayer is also an opportunity for God to speak to and commune with us. This is surely the more important aspect. It is not really so important what I tell God. What is far more important is WHAT HE TELLS ME. Therefore when you approach the place and time of prayer come with the understanding that you need to do more than merely talk with God, you must allow the time to wait on Him, listen to Him, and hear what He has to say to you.

e) Prayer is sharing our heart with God.

The Bible frequently speaks of "Pouring out our heart to the Lord." King David is obviously an outstanding example of this and Psalm 51 is perhaps the clearest instance of it. There were many times when David's heart was almost overwhelmed with the problems and distresses of life at which times he would wisely go before the Lord, saying:

Psa. 61:2 (KJV)

"When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock which is higher than I."

At such times David poured out his heart in God's hearing. He cast all his burdens on the Lord that God might sustain him. (Psa. 55:22)

f) Prayer involves waiting upon God.
David frequently advocated the practice of "waiting upon the Lord." This immediately implies that we should not rush into or out of God's presence, but rather that we should allocate sufficient time to wait patiently before Him. The concept of waiting also implies the idea of a servant or a waiter, who waits patiently and humbly on his Master. He stands by patiently awaiting a moment appropriate to his Master when He may choose to convey His wishes and desires.

g) Prayer implies surrender to the Master's Will.
The very practice of prayer is performed as an act of obedience to God. The ultimate reason why we pray is because God has commanded us to do so. So when we present ourselves before Him in prayer we do it in a spirit of submission and surrender to his Will and His expressed desire. This attitude alone is good reason for us to pray. Our souls need to renew their surrender to God and obedience to His Will.

2. Why we should pray?

a) Because God wants us to fellowship with Him.
Here is the most remarkable aspect of God's great plan of redemption, that the Almighty God who created and sustains the vast universe will humble Himself to commune with one of His tiny creations. That the God of eternity takes the time and makes the effort to converse intimately with someone so insignificant as you and I. That He is interested in the minute details of our life and willing to communicate with us about them. These things are a constant source of amazement to me and foster a deep sense of awe within me.

b) Because we humble ourselves when we pray.
Prayer is a beneficial spiritual exercise because in coming to God we humble ourselves before Him acknowledging by our very presence there that we realise our need of Him and our inability to do anything meaningful without His help. In prayer we assume the posture of a servant attending his master. We deliberately humble our flesh and all our human abilities and attainments by placing ourselves at God's feet in humble submission and petition.

c) Because we discipline our souls when we pray.
Prayer is a spiritual activity and it requires real discipline of our flesh to engage in it. The natural man does not delight in prayer and his desires and tendencies must be disciplined and brought into subjection in order to spend time before God. This exercise of discipline is essential for our spiritual growth and development. We enrich our spiritual man each time we spend time with God in meaningful prayer.

d) Because we acknowledge and express our dependence on God.
The very act of coming before God in prayer announces our dependence upon Him. Each time we seek Him out to bring ourselves and our needs before Him we acknowledge to Him our sense of dependence on Him. This is a beneficial exercise which helps us to maintain an appropriate attitude of humble awe before God.

e) Because we deny ourselves when we pray.

Matt. 16:24 (KJV)

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Meaningful prayer frequently requires the denial of our self man. There are so many things that we feel we need to do other than engaging in prayer, so in order to make the necessary time and opportunity to pray we must choose to deny ourselves. In so doing we fulfil the requirement which Jesus makes on all who would be true disciples.

f) Because Prayer is an essential aspect of our relationship to God.
Jesus Himself will always be our finest example and role model in the ministry of prayer. The Biblical account of His life on earth reveals the devoted consistency of His personal communion with His Father. On so many occasions we are told that Jesus withdrew from His activities, the crowds, and from His disciples too, in order to spend time in prayerful fellowship with His Father. If He needed to do this in order to maintain the quality of His relationship with God, how much more do you and I need to concentrate on this aspect? The kind of intimate communion which occurs in prayer is indispensable to the proper development of our relationship with God.

g) Because God meets our needs through Prayer.
Now we come to the very basics of prayer. The practical "bottom line" of why we should pray. It is precisely because in the wisdom and purpose of God He has ordained that He will meet our needs in response to our prayerful petition.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us:

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV)

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

This is one of the "mysteries" to which I referred earlier. Surely God already knows our circumstances and our needs, why does He then need us to tell Him about them? I believe that the answer to this lies to some degree in the matters I have mentioned above, i.e. His desire for our fellowship, the acknowledgement of our dependency on Him, and the fact that He wants us to spend time with Him in intimate communion.

h) Because God answers Prayer.
Whether our needs are personal, for ourselves and our family, or for others and for the success of the ministry, God's answers come in response to earnest prayer. If we pray, things will happen. If we do not pray, then nothing lasting or worth while will happen. The work of God is advanced only through prayer.

Establishing an effective prayer life

The whole purpose of prayer is to build a personal relationship with the Lord. This can only be done as we learn to wait in His Presence so that He is able to share the intimate secrets of His heart with us.

In order to have a close personal relationship with the Lord, we need to understand God's desires and His purposes ... for His people, for lost mankind, and everything concerning our daily walk with Him. As we fellowship with Him in prayer and communion, it is possible for His desires, to become our desires. (Psalm 37:4)

John Wesley once said "It seems that God is limited by our prayer life - that He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him." At first glance this statement seems preposterous. However, we read in Genesis 1. that after God had made man He gave him dominion over all the work of His hands. Therefore Adam had dominion over all the earth and all that God had made, an authority given to him by God Himself. After Satan had deceived Eve, Adam committed high treason and submitted to Satan, who then became the god of this world.

When we look at the condition of the world around us, with all its suffering, wars, hunger and starvation, immorality, hatred, rioting etc., we realise that if God is in control, it is definitely **NOT** going His way. No, Satan is the god of this world (1 Cor. 4:4) for a season, until his lease expires. However, we have a great weapon given to us by God, to break down the strongholds of Satan and to intervene on behalf of mankind and the nations of the world. **That weapon is PRAYER AND INTERCESSION.**

Satan has Adam's lease, God cannot do anything unless someone down here asks Him!

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV)

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

What is the purpose of prayer?

1. Ministry to the Lord

We are called as priests - "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." 1 Peter 2:9. We are priests unto God. Our ministry to God must take precedence over all other ministry. We minister to Him through praise and worship and commune with Him through prayer. We are able to undertake our priestly duties because of the blood of Jesus. His blood makes us righteous in order to enter into the Holy of Holies.

1 Peter 2:5. Eph. 1:4,5. Proverbs 15:8. 2 Cor. 5:21. Heb. 4:16.

2. Fellowship or communion with the Lord.

Spending time with Him because you love Him. Conversing, i.e. speaking AND listening. This will deepen into communion as you share your heart and deepest thoughts with Him. As He made His ways known to Moses, so He will start to share "His desires" with you through the Holy Spirit. Exodus 33:11-14. 15:23.

3. Prayer is the responsibility of every Christian.

The purpose of prayer is to determine God's Will in the situation and pray it into existence. Prayer had priority in Jesus' life. He put it before physical rest, social life and food. Prayer was the communication between Jesus and His Father as it should be for us also. Matt. 14:23. Luke 6:12.

4. Compassion for other people's distresses.

Interceding on behalf of others, such as loved ones in distress, for the heathen and those who are lost, those who have not yet come to the Lord, those needing healing or in stressful circumstances. Even giving thanks for situations, and for those who bless us. Eph. 1:15,16. Phil. 1:3,4,7.

Results of prayer

1. Prayer brings results for the kingdom and God is pleased.

As you begin to pray, communicating with God, He will speak to you, giving you direction, wisdom, knowledge, strength and protection. Col. 1:9-11. Psalm 40:1,2. John 15:7,8.

2. Prayer opens your spiritual eyes.

An understanding of the Spirit realm comes as you discipline yourself in prayer, praise, fasting, and meditating on God's Word as you wait upon the Lord. Ask the Lord to reveal what is taking place in the spiritual realm as Elisha did when he asked God to open His servant's eyes. 2 Kings 6:16,17.

3. Prayer can cause God to relent.

Although at times we feel that the fate of the world is in the hands of dictators, politicians, governors, kings etc., there are times when praying Christians are able to change the events of history. You and I may be a strong influence as Abraham and Daniel were in Old Testament times. It is exciting to think that our prayers can

actually change national and international events as we 'wage war in the heavenlies'. Ex. 32:14.

4. Through prayer you receive revelation.

God will reveal to you through the Holy Spirit what He desires you to pray about, and He may illuminate a problem area in someone's life or in a particular situation. He allows you a fragment of His knowledge. You must seek His clear guidance concerning the way to deal with the revelation which He gives you as you pray. Matt. 11:25,26. Luke 10:22. Phil 3:15.

5. Prayer helps you to rest in him.

God invites you to bring Him your problems and anxieties. As you do this with a prayer of thanksgiving, He promises to put His peace in your heart. Phil. 4:6,7. 1 Peter 5:7. Matt. 6:25,26. Psa. 55:22.

6. By praying in spiritual warfare you are able to pull down Satan's strongholds.

As Jesus had to battle Satan in His wilderness temptation, you too are able to be victorious as He was. He won His war with Satan before He went into public ministry. You also must win before you can fully function in what God has called you to do. Our success is dependent upon winning ... in prayer. Josh. 1:3,11,15. Mark 3:27. Daniel 10:12,13.

The manner of praying

The place where you pray is not as important as following the instructions that Jesus gave concerning prayer. In Matthew 6:5,6. Jesus speaks about praying in the "inner room." The inner chamber or room was generally situated in the roof of the house. It could be used both as a watchtower to sight the enemy, and also it was considered as a high place for an altar and place of prayer. The Scripture states that when you pray in secret, the Lord will reward you openly. However, it is not necessary to be in an inner room to pray or be in communion with the Lord. It is possible to have constant communion with Him as you walk or drive, even with others all around you. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray, you can lift your heart and spirit to the Lord wherever you are. Of course it is good and necessary to set aside time each day for quiet prayer, but also be alert to know when the Holy Spirit is quickening you to an urgent need that requires immediate prayer, regardless of where you are.

Here are some places mentioned in the Bible where people prayed:

In an Upper room
Acts 1:13,14.

In your House
Acts 10:30; 12:5-7.

By a riverside
Acts 16:3.

On a beach somewhere
Acts 21:5.

In a Lonely place
Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42.

In the Wilderness
Luke 5:16.

On the Mountains
Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28.

Alone
Matt. 6:6; 26:39; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 6:12; 9:18.

When should we pray?

Psalm 55:16–17 (KJV)

"16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me.

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."

When the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray, obey the urgency of the Spirit. He will give you an inner witness or an urge to pray for someone, or for some particular situation. Your obedient response possibly will save a desperate situation and could change the direction of someone's life for the glory of God.

It is possible to accomplish far more through prayer than in any other way. Alfred Tennyson, an English poet, once wrote "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." This was written more than a hundred years ago, but it is still true as we approach the 21st century.

The choice of prayer times rests with each person's situation. Ask the Lord to show you the times He wishes for you to commune with Him.

Some examples from Scriptures:

Morning.
Psalm 5:3. Psalm 88:13. Mark 1:35. Acts 2:1-4, 15.

Noon.
Psalm 55:17.

Evening.
Matthew 14:23. Mark 6:47. Luke 6:12. Acts 16:25.

Continuously.
1 Samuel 7:8. 1 Samuel 12:23. Nehemiah 1:6. Psalm 72:15. Luke 2:37. 6:12. Acts 10:2. Romans 1:9-10. Eph. 6:18. Col. 1:9. 4:2. 1 Thess. 3:10. 1 Tim. 5:5.

What length of time do we need to pray?

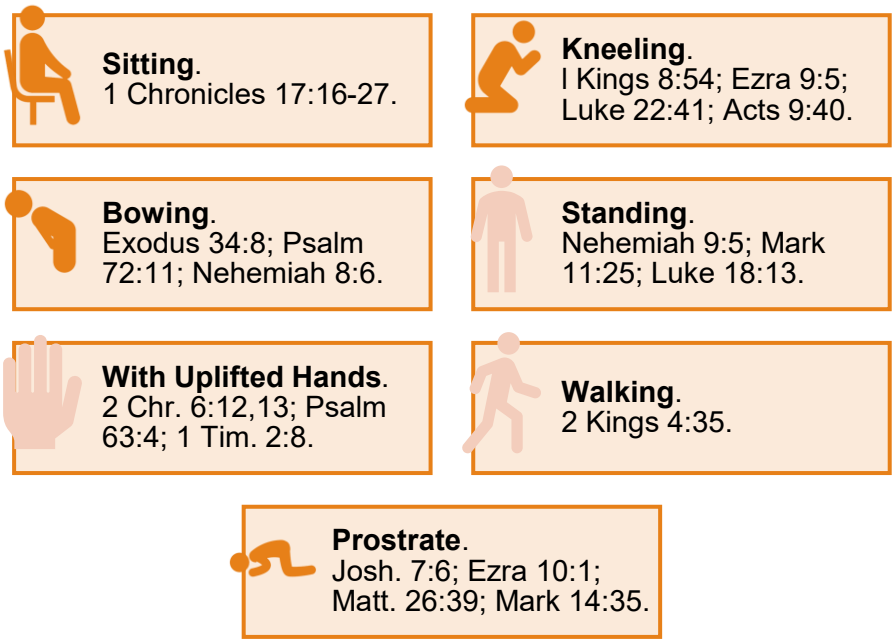
Jesus felt that it was quite a normal expectation that His disciples pray with Him for at least one hour. Yet at that time when He needed their support they let Him down and they themselves were not prepared for the situation which followed. They made sleep their priority instead of supporting and "watching" with their Lord. There will be times when you are able to pray for longer than one hour. But there may also be occasions when you may only be able to pray for ten or fifteen minutes. Remember that even a short prayer time is better than none at all.

The obvious ideal is to pray until an answer is received or until you have the assurance of the Lord that it is accomplished in the spiritual realm. How? By continual prayer until the Lord gives you a peace about the situation. Once you feel this peace, then it is good to begin to praise the Lord. Praise brings the victory, so give Him praise and thanksgiving for the victory that has been gained.

Sometimes the answer is long in coming, but don't give up. Remember the answer is not according to our manipulation, but according to God's perfect timing. He is never late, even if we think He could have answered us earlier! Be like the widow Jesus spoke about in the parable of Luke. Luke 18:1-8.

Before we start to pray, we could consider what posture to be in as we pray. Just as there are various places to pray, so there as also a variety of positions for prayer. The important thing is to be comfortable enough that you are able to concentrate on the Lord, and not be distracted by surroundings or an aching body.

The Scripture gives us some examples:



Types of prayer

1. Praise and thanksgiving

The Scripture directs us to:

Psalm 100:4 (NASB)

"Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His Name."

David is our great example in Scripture concerning both prayer and praise. In Psalm 103, he writes "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name." Then he goes on to say "forget not all His benefits, Who forgives all your iniquity, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, Who satisfies you with good as long as you live."

David knew the Lord who he was praising was the God who was active in his life. He was not worshipping a far-off remote God, but One who was identified with his needs. Everything within him called out in praise to the living God because he had experienced His forgiveness and healing, His love, mercy and redemption, His eternal goodness to all His children. David did not speak these words lightly. He knew what it was to be afflicted, persecuted, oppressed, hemmed in on all sides by his enemies; to feel discarded and separated from God, as if his prayers were not being answered. But his response in those circumstances was to PRAISE GOD!

In many of the Psalms, David both asks and praises at the same time. He was not afraid to come to God and declare openly his need. He does not look at the situation as hopeless, because he knows the power and faithfulness of God ... and David trusted Him.

The source of praise is the Holy Spirit activating your spirit to express approval and adoration of God's greatness. Develop the habit of praise during your prayer time.

2. Confession and forgiveness

In order that our prayer is not hindered, we need to be sure that no sin or guilt stands between ourselves and the Lord.

Isaiah 59:1–2 (NASB)

"Behold the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He cannot hear."

So we see that iniquity or sin can prevent our prayers from being heard, and of course, being answered.

As you begin your prayer time, pause and ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything that would separate you from God's Presence. Do as David did in Psalm 26:2,3

Psalm 26:2–3 (NASB)

"Examine me, O Lord, and try me; test my mind and heart. For Thy loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Thy truth."

If the Holy Spirit does put His finger on something in your life, then you need to confess it to the Lord in repentance and receive His forgiveness.

Once an area of darkness has been brought to the light of God's Word and repented of and the sin dealt with, the blood of Jesus covers it and we are told that the Lord remembers it no more. Don't keep bringing up sins that have been dealt with. The Lord says He has buried them and they are forgotten.

1 John 1:9 (KJV)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

One of Satan's wiles is to bring you into condemnation or guilt by constantly bringing past sins back to your mind. He tries to get your thoughts centred on yourself and away from God's mercy. When you confess, it doesn't always follow that you have a deep emotional experience to show you are forgiven. Simply ask, then accept by faith in God's Word that He will do what He says … He is faithful and just ... and forgives!

3. Forgiveness

Unforgiveness is one issue that will always stand between you and your full communication with the Lord.

Mark 11:25 (KJV)

"And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

This Scripture clearly indicates that we need God's forgiveness to be effective in prayer. This forgiveness only comes as we forgive others. Forgiveness also frees the other person or changes circumstances causing the problem. It allows the Holy Spirit to work, convicting of sin, righteousness and judgement.

Don't let pride keep you from experiencing a right relationship with the Lord. Forgive the person who has wronged you, no matter how hurtful the offence may have been. You will then experience a release in your spirit and your fellowship with the Lord will be restored.

Three possible areas of forgiveness are:

1. **Forgiving the person who has wronged you.**
2. **Absolving God.**
   Pronouncing Him free from blame, because in your estimation He did not intervene on your behalf in the way that you expected He would.
3. **Forgiving yourself.**
   Feelings of guilt and condemnation about your own participation in situations causing yourself or others some hurt.

Many times you will find it easier to forgive others or to forgive God, than to forgive yourself. You keep self-criticism and condemnation in your heart, but total forgiveness, which includes forgiving yourself, is essential to your effective praying.

Every day you can make a decision to walk in forgiveness that day. Choose to forgive others as God has forgiven you, and do it immediately at the time of the offence, as Jesus did. (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness and repentance go hand in hand (Proverbs 28:13. Matthew 3:6,8.) To repent is to feel such regret and remorse that you turn away from your thoughts or actions, releasing others from any resentment or bitterness which you or they may hold.

If your thoughts are repeatedly drawn in a negative way to a person you have chosen to forgive, you must take authority over your thoughts. Command your mind, in Jesus Name to be free of them and substitute thoughts that are true, honourable, right, pure, excellent and worthy of praise.

After the Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart, accept the Lord's cleansing and forgiveness. Ask Him to refill you with His Holy Spirit.

4. Intercession

Jesus, our great High Priest provides us with the example of how to intercede. He entered into intercession when He was here on earth and continues to intercede for us in heaven. (Heb. 7:25.) So when we intercede, we are following His example.

Intercession has been described as a love response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit for an urgent need. It may just be a cry for help to the Lord, on behalf of someone you love.

Galatians 6:2 (RSV)

"Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of Christ."

God is pleased when you pray for others, coming in intercession on their behalf.

Daniel chapter ten records an instance when Daniel received a message from God concerning great conflict between the angelic hosts. The Hebrew word translated "*message*" sometimes translates as "*burden*." Often when the Lord gives you a message or word, there is a heaviness or burden placed upon you to pray that Word into action. Sometimes He directs you to pray the Word of God. At other times you may feel the strong desire to come in spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness.

To intercede, you make yourself available to receive a prayer burden from the Lord. It is a holy trust when the Lord reveals His secrets to you in this way. It must not be taken lightly, and you must show yourself worthy of this trust.

When you feel that the Holy Spirit is moving in your heart concerning a situation He reveals, be obedient to cry out to God about the situation that the Spirit brings to your mind. Sometimes He directs us to intercede for spiritual leaders who are under attack, Missionaries in heathen countries, people in danger or who are desperately ill. Many times one knows nothing of the circumstances of these being interceded for, apart from a directive of the Holy Spirit.

How do you know who to pray for? One way to begin is to ask: " Lord, what is on YOUR heart? Which is the most important situation? You may wonder how you will know if the Holy Spirit is calling you to pray. The Holy Spirit will indicate by words, messages or thoughts that stir your spirit. Maybe He will bring to your mind a face, a name, family, a Church, a Nation etc., as pictures in your imagination.

Intercession starts and ends with God. After He gives you a subject to pray over, you should pray until you feel He wants you to move on to the next situation. It is not unusual to experience emotions such as laughter, groaning, weeping or travailing sounds. (Gal. 4:19). This doesn't always happen but it can sometimes accompany deep intercession. Many times you may find yourself praying in an authoritative manner over principalities and powers of the evil unseen world.

When the burden for intercession is lifted, you may experience other emotions, such as peace, or joy accompanied with laughter or tears. Regardless of your feelings, know that your petitions have touched the Father's heart.

5. Petitions

To Petition simply means to make a request or supplication in humility to one in authority. So when you petition the Lord you are asking for a specific need. Many people do not get past this type of prayer, but the Lord instructs us to pray this way. 1 John 5:15.

A petition is a specific request. An example is Hannah, who came to God with her request for a son, making an unselfish vow to return him to the service of God. God heard and granted her request, and she in turn honoured the vow that she had made. Hannah had wanted a child for a long time, but when she expressed her petition aloud to the Lord, with a pure heart, she received the complete answer to her prayer. (1 Sam. 1 and 2).

God encourages YOU to petition Him. He says, “Ask, Seek, Knock." If you do this, He has promised to answer. (Matt. 7:7,8).

Why do prayers sometimes seem to go unanswered? Probably a better way of putting this would be " why wasn't my prayer answered in the way that I thought it would be answered?"

No one can explain why some prayers don't appear to have been answered. These are the times when we must simply bow to the sovereign will of God, and trust Him knowing that His ways are perfect. We certainly don't have all knowledge of these things, but we do have some answers, based on the Word of God. Listed below are some of the reasons that our prayers may not be answered:

☒ Unbelief

James 1:5-6,7 "*ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.. and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. .. for let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord*." Jesus encouraged His followers to believe as they prayed, then they would receive the answer.

☒ Failing to abide in the Lord

John 15:7 says "*If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you*."

☒ Not asking according to God's will.

God's will is often revealed to us by spending time with His Word, and allowing Him to speak to us as we meditate upon it. Certain things such as salvation, for example, are very clear in God's Word. We need to understand God's will and desires as we pray. Exodus 32:11-14. 1 John 5:14,15.

On other occasions God may reveal His Will to our heart or mind as we wait quietly before Him. Suddenly we realise that He has made us aware of His Will.

☒ Unforgiveness

Matt. 6:14, 15 is a part of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples when He was instructing them how to pray. "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" Read also Matt. 18:21,22. Isaiah 43:25.

☒ Unconfessed or unrepentant sin

Sin separated man from God in the first place, in the Garden of Eden and it still does today. Psalm 66:18 states "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,*" and Isaiah 59:2 - "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear*." We need to search our hearts and ask the Lord to show us if there is a blockage to our prayers because of unrepented sin.

☒ Giving up too soon

Many prayers go unanswered because we give up too easily. The Lord desires for us to wait upon Him faithfully. He says, "*Ask, Seek, Knock*" (Matt. 7:7), which is a progression of the depth of our prayer. Remember the story of the persistent person who asked his friend at midnight, for bread. Eventually, his sheer persistence brought success. (Luke 11:5-8). And that is how Jesus instructs us to pray, not giving up until the answer comes.

☒ Lack of unity

There is extra strength in corporate prayer, but to be effective, unity amongst those praying is essential. Matt. 18:19 says "*that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."*

☒ With-holding tithes and offerings

Malachi 3:8-11 speaks of this blessing of the Lord which follows being faithful in tithing, and the punishment which comes from with-holding that which belongs to the Lord. The early Church were encouraged to give also (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). Jesus often spoke of giving, and the blessings that accompanied giving.

☒ Not praying in the authority of Jesus' name

When Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, He gave them a pattern to follow and we should also closely follow His directions. God's ways do not change. (John 16:23) "*whatsoever you ask the Father in my Name, He will give it you*." Whenever we approach the Father, we need to remember that we can only do so because of His Son. So we come to Him, in the Name of Jesus.

Asking something in Jesus' Name means asking God in the authority of the Name of Jesus. That Name has tremendous influence with God. It is a key that opens the door to God's store house.

But "asking in Jesus' Name" also means asking that His Name might be honoured and glorified. We are therefore asking God to do something, and our motive is not selfish or carnal. It is certainly not that we personally might benefit in some way. It is simply and purely that the Name of Jesus might be honoured. That as a direct result of the answer to that prayer Jesus Himself might be esteemed, honoured and glorified.

☒ Not fellowshipping with the Lord

Many times our prayers are like telegrams - just rushing in and out of God's presence. This is almost insulting to the Almighty. He desires our love, our fellowship, our companionship. He wants us to spend time in His presence, just enjoying Him. Jesus spent priority time with the Father, and so should we. (Luke 6:12,13)

☒ Asking with wrong motives

James 4:2-3 "*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend (it) in your pleasures*." (ASV)

☒ Speaking ill of others

James 4:11 "*Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it*." (NIV)

James 5:9 "*Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!"* (NIV)

Gal 5:24-26 "*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other*." (NIV)

☒ Fractured marriage relationship

1 Pet 3:7 "*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers*." (NIV)

☒ Indifference

Prov 1:24-28 "*But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you--when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me*." (NIV)

☒ Disobedience

Deut 1:43-45 "*So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the LORD's command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you*." (NIV)

Isa 1:19-20 "*If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken*." (NIV)

☒ Idolatry

Deut. 7:25-26. Josh 7. Ezek. 14:3. Deut 7:25-26

"*The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction*." (NIV)

Ezek 14:3. "*Son of man, these people are devoted to their idols, and they are allowing themselves to fall into sin. Should they be allowed to ask Me for help?"*

☒ Prejudice and hate

Prov. 26:24-28. 1 John 2:9-12. 3:21-23. I Jn 3:21-23

"Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." (NIV)

☒ **Touching God's anointed**

1 Samuel 26:5-11. Psalm 105:15. Psa 105:15

"*Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm*." (NIV)

☒ **Fear**

Psalm 56:4-11. Prov. 29:25. 1 John. 4:18. I Jn 4:18

"*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love*." (NIV)

☒ **Not examining yourself**

1 Cor. 11:27-31. 1 Cor 11:28-29

"*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body*." (KJV)

☒ **Despising God's word**

Proverbs. 28:9. Prov 28:9

"*If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable*." (NIV)

☒ **Neglecting mercy**

Proverbs 21:13.

"*If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered*." (NIV)