

Lesson 1

Why Pray?

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. One of the more profound statements about prayer is found in Luke 18:1, “Men ought always to pray and not to lose heart.” This is profound because it is exactly what happens in our daily lives. We either learn to pray or we lose heart about prayer and become discouraged. Christ confronts us with two inescapable choices: Either we learn to cry out to an unseen Father who is ever present with us, or else we must lose heart. NOTE: The only positive direction for us is to learn to pray.
- B. Prayer is almost a forgotten art in most of our churches. We have substituted emotionalism, showboat preaching, organization and busyness for real spirituality in prayer. Methods move men to busyness but prayer moves God to move men for spiritual activity.

We are constantly straining to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel.

This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God’s plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God’s method.

What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men— men of prayer. (E. M. Bounds, Power Through Prayer).

- C. The mark of decadent religion is that men are in deep theological discussion about God but do not know Him personally. They are great with words but have no action in the life. Luther said to the colleagues of his day, “You that manifest a concern about religion, why don’t you pray?” For most of us, the motto of our lives is: “When everything else fails, try prayer.”

II. WHY WE DO NOT PRAY

- A. Introduction: Christians have a multitude of excuses as to why they do not pray, but these can be boiled down to four basic ones.
- B. Lack of Time: Most Christians acknowledge that prayer is necessary but they cannot find time to commune with God. They have forfeited the best things for good things. This excuse usually shows where our hearts really are, for men do what they want to do. We are told to “redeem the time” (Eph. 5:16), and prayer is a good way to do it. Part of our spiritual warfare is to make time to pray.

NOTE: Martin Luther said, "I have so much business I cannot get along without spending three hours daily in prayer."

- C. Lack of Knowledge: Some Christians claim that they do not know how to pray. Perhaps they have thought of prayer as some emotional experience and they have never had it. Real prayer is as natural for the Christian as breathing, for it is simply talking with God. Besides, a knowledge of how to pray can be gained by a diligent reading of the Bible. NOTE: It is one thing to know about prayer and another thing to be praying in the Spirit. We need to talk less about prayer and pray more.
- D. Lack of Results: A person may have tried praying but did not see instantaneous results so he became discouraged. We are told to keep on asking, expecting God to answer (Matt. 7:7-8). Christians must learn to persevere in prayer.
- E. Lack of Faith: This is undoubtedly the basic reason for failing to pray. We simply do not believe that the omnipotent God can meet our needs. The Lord's word, "Oh, ye of little faith," still haunts men even to this day.

III. WHY WE ARE TO PRAY

- A. Because We Are God's Children:
 - 1. Before our salvation we were spiritually dead, separated from the life of God. We could not commune with Him in prayer. When we received Christ, we received eternal life which is the life of God. For the first time our souls and spirits could communicate with God and say, "Abba, Father." Unbelievers can pray and God hears their prayers but He does not answer them, for they have no life from God. Non-Christians do not have the privilege of access to the Father through Christ (cf. Prov. 28:9; John 9:31). NOTE: The whole problem of the prayers of unbelievers will be taken up in another lesson.
 - 2. Through the new birth we now have access to the Father and the privilege of prayer. Because Christ has become our life, we now can commune with God. We have been chosen of God with the result that we can now begin to petition God (John 15:16). As children of God (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26), prayer has now become a family matter (Matt. 7:7-11).
- B. Because God Commanded Us To Pray: The fact that God has commanded all Christians to pray should be motivation enough (I Thess. 5:17). God has not commanded us to pray to make it a burden, but He knows the human heart's desire to procrastinate and by not praying His people will miss a blessing. POINT: Prayer is not only a privilege but it is also a responsibility and deals with man's duty to God.
- C. Because God Has Given Us Many Prayer Promises: The Father wants us to exercise faith in His person through the Word. He has given us promises to know and claim. Many of these are written out in full on separate pages at the end of this lesson.
- D. Because God Says Prayer Is Important: Prayer is far more important to consistent Christian living than most Christians realize. It is more important than military might (Ezra 8:21-23), or food or sleep (Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12), and is even placed before preaching in God's method of reaching men (Acts 6:4). POINT: Without prayer a believer cannot function properly. He should never abuse his privilege of prayer.
- E. Because Prayer Teaches Us Our Dependence upon God: Our Lord said that without Him we can do absolutely nothing that will count for eternity (John 15:5) and with Him we can do all spiritual things He requires of us (Phil. 4:13). The power of Christ is available only to those who know they are weak and cast themselves completely on God for help. Our strength lies in childlike

helplessness. POINT: The very essence of the meaning of prayer is that one needs help beyond himself. The more one leans upon the arm of the flesh the less likely he or she will really be a strong believer in prayer. Human strength and prayer cannot coexist.

- F. Because Prayer Is the Only Means a Christian Has to Commune with God: God speaks to man through His Word and through the quietness of prayer, but the Christian can only commune with God in prayer. It is the one avenue that we have to God; thus we should learn all we can about prayer that we may be effective in our communion with God.

Prayer is the most important thing in my life.

If I should neglect prayer for a single day,

I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.

Martin Luther

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PRAYER PROMISES

- Eph. 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, . . .
- Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.
- 1 John 3:22 Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.
- James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- Psa. 6:9 The Lord has heard my supplication, The Lord receives my prayer.
- Psa. 2:8 Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thy inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.
- Col. 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving
- Luke 18:1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart
- Jude 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; . . .
- 2 Cor. 1:20 For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

- 1 Kings 8:56 Not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.
- Jer. 33:3 Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.
- John 14:12-14 And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.
- 1 Thes. 5:17 Pray without ceasing
- Luke 11:9 And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.
- Psa. 10:17 O Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble; Thou wilt strengthen their heart, Thou wilt incline Thine ear.
- Is. 58:9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry, and He will say, "Here I am."
- Ps. 66:18-19 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.
- James 4:2 You do not have because you do not ask.
- James 5:16 The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
- John 16:24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.
- 1 John 4:14 And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- Matt. 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- Mark 11:24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you.
- John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.
- Matt. 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.
- Isa. 65:24 It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.
- Phil. 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- Rom. 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- Matt. 21:22 And everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

- John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.
- 1 Pet. 3:12 “For the eyes of the lord are upon the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer
- Psa. 38:15 For I hope in Thee, O Lord; Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.
- Matt. 7:9-11 Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!
- Prov. 15:29 The Lord is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.
- 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 Thes. 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
- Psa. 55:22 Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.
- Psa. 55:17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.
- Psa. 18:6 In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.
- Psa. 40:1 I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, and heard my cry.
- Psa. 20:5 May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might and it lies in Thy hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name” (1 Chron. 29:11-13).