

A LIFE OF PRAYER



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PREVAILING PRAYER

I'm convinced that our greatest need today is powerful, persistent, passionate, **prevailing prayer**. The need is far greater than most of God's people realise. The moral fibre of our nation has crumbled. Real love and compassion have become almost non-existent. Confusion, greed and upheaval have swept across nations like a tidal wave. If you remember nothing else from this book, please remember this: "When prayer fails, satan prevails." The demons of hell rejoice when the child of God is prayer-less. satan knows well that prayer-less Christians are powerless Christians.

There is a wonderful story in **Exodus 17:8-16** that demonstrates the principle of **prevailing prayer**. *"Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand'. So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, **when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.** But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven'. And Moses built an altar and called its name, *The-Lord-Is-My-Banner*; for he said, 'Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'."*

Notice in verse 12, *"Moses' arms finally became too heavy...."* This struck me because I had always assumed that tiredness was the reason Moses had put his hands down. But in fact Moses lowered his hands before verse 12 and it was not tiredness. Moses held up the staff, and when Israel had the advantage, he thought it would be OK to put his hands down. But when he did, of course, the Amalekites gained the upper hand. So Moses immediately put his hands and the staff of God back up. Then the battle turned in Israel's favour again.

How many times Moses did this we don't know. But I believe it must have been a least a couple of times for Moses to begin to see the pattern and understand that he had to keep his hands and the staff of the Lord up 'all the time'.

Later, when Moses finally did get tired, Aaron and Hur came and stood along side Moses to help him. I want you to understand, Moses lowered his hands for the very same reason many of us stop praying - in the natural we see things improving, the battle turning our way, a positive change in circumstances etc., and so we think it is OK to lower our prayer commitment. We fail to realise that contained in our prayers (like in Moses hands), it is God's staff, God's banner, God's insignia, God's standard, and God's authority.

Like Moses, we need to learn to **prevail** in prayer. That is, to pray until God gives us total victory. Yes, we all need to see the need for prevailing prayer! Otherwise we will only see partial breakthroughs. The victory appears to be there, so we stop praying. For a while it seems like battle is won and then the enemy gains the upper hand again. *"I thought I got the victory in that area?"* In reality you received 'A' victory but not 'THE' victory. If you desire to receive THE victory you must outlast the battle in prayer.

Matthew 11:12, ***".....The Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people attack it."*** At times we are too passive with our spiritual enemies, too gracious. God wants to totally crush and utterly destroy the evil forces that are trying to keep us from Himself and fulfilling what He has destined for us. We need to prevail in prayer for total victory - and nothing less!

Back to our opening scripture... Moses fights the Amalakites and gets the victory by **prevailing**. In a separate incident Gideon fights the Amalakites who have joined the Midianites with 300 men. The battle is theirs, however, notice in Judges 8:4 that Gideon then crossed the Jordan River with his 300 men, and though they were exhausted, they continued to chase the enemy. Now let us go to the time of King Saul (1 Samuel 15:1-3). One day Samuel said to Saul, *"I anointed you king of Israel because the Lord told me to. Now listen to this message from the Lord! This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I have decided to settle accounts with the nation of Amalek for opposing Israel when they came from Egypt. Now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation—men, women, children, babies, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys'."* Saul's mission is clear – *"completely destroy the Amalekites."*

For those who know the story, Saul does obtain a victory but he does not fully obey the Lord's commands and keeps some of the plunder. A key to prevailing prayer is obedience. 100% obedience!

Remember the above example - the king did not fully obey, he only went part of the way. Saul obeyed 99% and it had drastic consequences for his reign and kingdom. Prevailing prayer is to obey God all the way, until the very end, until there is **total victory!**

If you continued to read the word of God and arrived at Esther, you'd find that the enemy of God's people was Haman the Agagite. The Bible commentators say Haman was a descendant of King Agag - of the Amalakites. The people who Saul was told to completely destroy. You need to obey God, also prevail in prayer, so that total victory is established! Your future depends on this! Your future can be decided by your prayers!

There are many different types of prayers and many different ways to pray. This is why we've been focusing on **prevailing prayer** - prayer that gets results. Under this heading there are two main ways to pray; the prayer of intercession and the prayer of faith. But there is a third, and in this chapter we will be examining what it is to pray in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit has always been a very controversial subject and probably needs clarification from the church leadership.

Prayer is a command of God, and is to be practiced both in public and in private. Yes, such a command brings those that have the heart to pray, into great intimacy with God; and the **prevailing prayer** will receive great things from God, both for the person that prayed, and for those that are being prayed for. Prayer is the highest form of speech because it opens the heart of God, and it is a means by which the empty soul can be filled. By prayer every believer can open his heart to God, as to a friend, and obtain fresh evidence of God's great love and friendship toward him.

Let us now look at some of the scriptures that refer to praying in the Spirit: "*But you, beloved, build up yourselves on your most holy faith praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*" **Jude 20-21**

"*Praying in the Spirit at all times with every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.*" **Ephesians 6:18**

"*For he that speaks in a tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; however, in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.*" **1 Corinthians 14:2**

"For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." **Romans 8:26**

Notice, in the natural realm, we do not know what we should pray for as we ought to. This doesn't mean that we do not know what needs praying into but rather that we may not know how to pray effectively for it. For this reason the Holy Spirit aids us in our intercession. This is what **praying in the Spirit** is all about. And such prayer or intercession comes in the form of "groanings which cannot be uttered".

Tongues are "groanings which cannot be uttered". They communicate audibly with God the Holy Spirit's intercession for us in utterances and words which are not found in our human vocabulary. The gift of tongues is imparted into our spirit man by the Holy Spirit when we are filled with the Spirit. Tongues helps our spirit man to communicate with God according to His desires (and will), and the exact need or action required in any situation.

Without the Holy Spirit, we won't know what the exact need or required action is because we only perceive things with our physical senses. For example, without the Holy Spirit we won't be aware of the evil assignments sent by wicked spirits against us. Notice also that when we speak in tongues we speak mysteries that only God understands, which is of great benefit when involved in spiritual warfare (**1 Corinthians 14:12**).

Without the Holy Spirit, we do not know what we should pray for as we ought because we do not see realities as we ought. This is why we need Him to help us in intercession. The Holy Spirit enables our spirit man (by the gift of tongues) to make intercession for us according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit knows exactly how to get us to where change for good can be effected. He is the key to our success!

Note, while you are praying, God is searching your heart, examining your motives and intentions (**1 John 5:14**). *"And he who searches our hearts knows,"* that is, approves only what is agreeable to *"the mind of the Spirit"* - because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (**Romans 8:27**). God only hears and responds to that which is in accordance with His will, and nothing else. And it is only the Holy Spirit that can tell us what to petition; only the Spirit is able to search everything out, even the deep things of God.

If you want to truly connect with God, then you must allow His Spirit to reveal His perfect will. So must learn to pray in the Spirit at all times. "*At all times*" is **prevailing prayer**. Isn't it? It means praying without ceasing! Remember what happened to Moses when he dropped his hands. The very same thing happens every time you stop praying. And it's easier to pray continuously if you pray in the Spirit. Do this and you will be amazed how your life will change. The victories won't come and go - they will remain - they will be TOTAL!

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The power of prayer should not be underestimated. **James 5:16-18** declares, "...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops." God most definitely listens to prayers, answers prayers, and moves in response to prayers. Jesus taught, "...I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (**Matthew 17:20**). **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** tells us, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." The Bible urges us, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (**Ephesians 6:18**).

How do we tap into it?

The power of prayer is not the result of the person praying. Rather, the power resides in the God who is being prayed to. **1 John 5:14-15** tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of Him."

No matter what person is praying, the passion behind the prayer, or the purpose of the prayer - God answers prayers that are in agreement with His will. His answers are not always yes, but they are always in our best interest. When our desires line up with His will, in time, we will come to understand this. When we pray passionately and purposefully, according to God's will, God responds powerfully! We cannot access powerful prayer by using "magic formulas." Our prayers being answered is not based on the eloquence of our prayers. We don't have to use certain words or phrases to get God to answer our prayers. In fact, Jesus rebukes those who pray using repetitions, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (**Matthew 6:7-8**).

Prayer is communicating with God. All you have to do is ask God for His help. **Psalm 107:28-30** reminds us, *"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and He guided them to their desired haven."* There's power in prayer!

If you go around looking for advice on relationships, you are probably going to be told about good communication. What you have with God is also a relationship. You praying, is your way of communicating with God. And the power of prayer surpasses that of any normal means of communication. That is because a prayer is you having **faith** in Him. This means then that when you pray, it is not all about saying some memorised clichés. You got to make it as personal as possible. If you have to pray using the formulas, then internalize the words you are saying. Place your whole heart and soul into it - and believe!

What kind of things should we pray for?

God's help, through the power of prayer, is available for all kinds of requests and issues. **Philippians 4:6-7** tells us, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* If you need an example of a prayer, read **Matthew 6:9-13**. These wonderful verses are known as the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer is not a prayer we are supposed to memorize and simply recite to God. It is only an example of how to pray and the things that should go into a prayer - worship, trust in God, requests, confession, protection, etc. Pray for these kinds of things, but speak to God using your own words. Have sincere dialogue!

The power of prayer reaches out and includes everybody. When you pray, do not always ask for things that can benefit you alone. Include in your prayers your loved ones. Pray for guidance so that you may deal with others in your life more properly. Pray for your enemies and pray that anger and resentment be banished. When you pray, make sure you put in belief. Only then can your prayers show results. Take note though that your way may not always be God's way. Your prayer might have been answered already, but in a way you did not expect. So do not lose your faith! If He has heard, then He has answered!

Praying is not only about asking for things to happen (future). For you to experience the power of prayer fully, you should learn to pray with gratitude. Even when you do not ask anything, God makes sure He provides for you.

In fact, you may not even realise that you are so blessed! Therefore, start being aware of your blessings and give thanks for every one of them. Praying is also about asking reconciliation with God. If you feel you have strayed from His plan and purpose, praying can help you lighten your burdens. Praying can help you rekindle your relationship with God.

These days, too many people find less and less time for prayer. But you should know that the power of prayer is undeniable. You should allow yourself to experience it more and more. The hand of God is evident wherever you look. The beauty and mystery of nature, the feelings of good will and love for someone close to you, the kindness you unexpectedly receive (and much more), are all evidences of God's presence in this world. You must have **faith** and trust that God will provide. Exercise your faith and do not forget to communicate with God. Go ahead reach out in prayer. God is there waiting to provide!

God wants to share His power with us. As a loving Father, He promises to meet all our needs. He promises to give us "good things," and He promises to give us the desires of our heart. But we must be willing to seek Him, trust Him and obey Him. Read your Bible and follow the instructions of Jesus when praying to your Father in Heaven! You will find a way to forgiveness, mercy, understanding, and indescribable blessings and victories. Remember the promise of **Ephesians 3:20** that God "*is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.*" Claim God's promises. Establish that lifeline of persistent and powerful prayer! It will mean a new and victory-filled life for you.

Yes, you can claim every one of those promises! Let us look at a couple of them. "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (**Philippians 4:19**). What do you have need of? Do you have need of food or clothing? Do you have need of a job? Do you have need for healing? Then ask in prayer! God promises to provide your every need. But you must do your part!

What did Jesus say? "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*" (**Matthew 7:7**). As long as you are asking for God's will to be done, not your own, He will provide your every need (as He has promised)! We have other needs that we sometimes do not really recognise, such as being put back on the right spiritual track when we have gone astray. Sometimes we need correction. We can be comforted to realise that our Lord will give us the guidance we need to get back on the right track. Sometimes this can be painful, but it is always for our benefit.

If we are to experience the power of prayer, seeking God's will, we must have our priorities straight. What are your priorities in life? Do you know what your goal in life should be? In the sixth chapter of the book of Matthew, Jesus emphasised that God will provide our needs, but that we also have a role to play: "*Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (**Matthew 6:33**). To what "things" was Jesus referring? He was speaking of all the physical things (human needs) we often worry about because we do not trust Him enough! Jesus sighted fearful people for their anxieties: "*Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*" (**Matthew 6:30**)

Always remember, the power of prayer resides in God's will. No matter how you compose your prayers, or how you get passionate about it, as long as what you are praying for is God's will, it shall be provided. However, if you don't believe in the first place you'll never experience the rewards of praying. Well, you may be experiencing the 'greatness' of the will of God, but you'll probably be unable to recognise it. Failure of recognition will make you unable to appreciate God's intentions. So believe, pray and receive whatever is the will of God for you! The will of God is the **word of God**, and His word is full of accounts describing the power of prayer in various situations. How powerful is prayer? The power of prayer has overcome enemies (**Psalms 6:9-10**), conquered death (**2 Kings 4:3-36**), brought healing (**James 5:14-15**), and defeated demons (**Mark 9:29**). God, through prayer - opens eyes, changes hearts, heals wounds, and grants wisdom (**James 1:5**). The **power of prayer** should never be underestimated because it draws on the glory and infinite power of the Almighty God of the universe! The supreme Ruler! The King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Daniel 4:35 proclaims, "*All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: 'What have You done?'*"

The one thing we can be sure of is this... The "powers of heaven" are accessible to us through prayer. God has done this already, and it was fully accomplished when He sent His Son Jesus to the cross for all of us!

The Prayer Of Faith

James 5:15, *“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.”*

There are various types of prayers and many ways to pray. So it is important that we know ‘how’ to pray and what our prayers can achieve. Prayer is a subject we hear about on a very regular basis. We are told to pray daily or to pray continuously. We are also told to pray at certain times, and on specified schedules, or to “pray it through.” Unfortunately, most of us receive very little instruction on exactly how we should pray. It can be very frustrating for new believers, and experienced believers alike, when they know that they should pray and yet they have no idea of what to say or do. In the first chapter we studied “Prayer that Prevails” and I felt it was beneficial in helping us to understand why we should Pray in the Spirit.

It has been said that God answers every prayer. Sometimes He says, "Yes." Sometimes He says, "No." And sometimes He says, "Wait." While there is a lot of truth in that statement, why would you ever pray a prayer that God would say "No" to? There are, of course, reasons why we do that (mostly due to a lack of knowledge); but the purpose of this series is to teach you how to pray prayers that God will say "Yes" to. This study is not intended to give you all of the answers to every circumstance that you might face. But if you learn the principles we will examine, you will have the tools you need to develop an effective and rewarding prayer life.

As mentioned, there are many different kinds of prayer that may be used at various times under differing circumstances. There are prayers of **thanksgiving** when you thank God for His goodness and mercy. There are prayers of **praise** when you tell God how good He is. There are prayers of **petition** and **supplication** in which you will make a special request to God. There are **scripted prayers, spontaneous prayers, and ceremonial prayers**. The prayer we’ll focus on this chapter is the Prayer of Faith. The first thing you must accept is that the Prayer of Faith requires zeal and confidence.

Yes, your praying should be bold and strong. Praying that moves God is prayer that moves you. If you are not moved by your own prayers how do you expect them to move God. Galvanising (‘faith filled’) prayer is what’s needed in the lukewarm laid back Christianity of today. A famous commentator once said: *“Prayer requires more of the heart than the tongue.”*

And I totally agree! Praying shouldn't be a pretentious spiritual exercise, but a passionate and fervent encounter with God. It was said of John Fletcher (the early Methodist preacher) that he stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night, frequently and with great passion. Martin Luther had a motto: *"He that has prayed well has prepared well."*

The Prayer of Faith is a "prayer that changes things." But note that it changes things and not people. Too often we try to help someone by praying that they will change their behaviour. But people do not change against their will. The Prayer of Faith changes **things** or **circumstances**. Anything that can be seen is subject to change and can be affected by a Prayer of Faith. *"... for the things which are seen [are] temporal; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal."* (**2 Corinthians 4:18**) The Prayer of Faith changes things like physical ailments, lack of wisdom, even your employment status.

Through the Prayer of Faith, you can receive healing and health for your body, wisdom for your mind, and even a good job. But before you get the wrong idea, the prayer of faith is not a magic wand or a genie in a bottle. It is a tool that we can use to implement God's will in our lives. Through the Prayer of Faith, we can have the things that God desires for us to have. God desires us to be healthy, wise, and prosperous, etc. Although these good things may not be a reality in your life right now, with the Prayer of Faith, these things that you are hoping for can become reality.

I'm sure we will all agree that prayer is a vital part of the Christian life, but how does prayer and faith work together? Charles Finney said this, *"Faith is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer."* He went on to say, (quote) *"There is such a thing as offering well-meaning desires, which are acceptable to God as such, yet do not include the exercise of faith in regard to actually receiving those blessings. But such desires are not prevailing prayer - this is not praying in faith. God may see fit to grant the things desired, as an act of kindness and love, but it would probably not be in answer to prayer. I am speaking now of the kind of faith that insures the blessing. Don't misunderstand me, as I'm not saying that there is nothing in prayer that is acceptable to God without this kind of faith. But I am speaking of the faith which secures the very blessing it seeks."*

Praying in faith gets results! To prove this it is only necessary to repeat what the apostle James expressly tells us: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and without reproach; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no wavering. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed to and fro."* (**James 1:5-6**).

We know that personal prayer engages us in intimate conversation with God and that this is very pleasing to Him. However, we also know that it's impossible to please God without **faith (Hebrews 11:6)**. Therefore, faith and prayer must be synonymous with each other. When praying you must believe, and you must also believe that you've received the answer to your prayers. *"Therefore I say to you, What things so ever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them"* (**Mark 11:24**).

Notice, the first thing you must do is believe. You are to believe in the existence of God - **"He that comes to God must believe that He is"** - and in God's willingness to answer prayer - **"and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."** There are many who believe in the existence of God, but do not believe in the effectiveness of the Prayer of Faith. When you come to God in prayer you must first believe that God exists, and thereafter, believe that He does want to reward your faith. Why else would you come to Him?

The next step is this - you must now exercise your faith by believing that you have received the answer to your prayer. Notice, you are to believe that you have "already received" - something - but what? Not something, or anything, as it happens, but some particular thing you asked for in prayer. And when exactly are you expected to believe that you shall have the very things you pray for? The answer... When you have evidence of it! Faith must always have evidence. A man cannot believe a thing, unless he sees something which he has accepted as proof. He is under no obligation to believe, and has no right to believe that anything will happen, unless he has found evidence. It is the height of fantasy to believe without the existence of evidence.

Therefore, before applying **faith** you must first find proof - conclusive, infallible proof. This is the only way you'll be able to believe that you have received what you've asked for in prayer. And where do you go to look for this proof? You search the promises of God. I guarantee that you will find a promise of God which relates to you present situation.

The Prayer of Faith obtains the blessing due to the fact that your faith relies on real evidence! Evidence that says, *"to grant you that thing you desire is the perfect will of God."*

James 5:16 says: *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* (The word "man" means mankind and therefore includes women.) There are three elements here that are required for a prayer that avails much; that is, a prayer that God will say "Yes" to.

1. First, the man praying must be **righteous**.
2. Second, the prayer must be **fervent**.
3. And third, the prayer must be **effective**.

The first two have been widely taught to believers so we will look in depth at the elements of an "effective" prayer. If you are righteous (right with God) and your prayer is fervent (heart-felt and taken seriously), then it must also be effectual in order for it to avail much; that is, in order for God to answer "Yes". If the words of your prayer are ineffective, then you have not given God much to answer. In fact, some prayers are so horribly ineffective that God will answer "No" in order to protect us from ourselves. Consider the man praying for a loved one who was stricken with cancer. In his prayer, he said, *"Dear God, I ask you to help his cancer."* The prayer was not effective because his loved one's cancer did not need any help. It was already killing him. Now, of course, he did not mean it that way but that **is** what he said.

In this situation, it would have been "effective" to ask God to remove the cancer and help the man's health recover swiftly. You can see then that it is important to choose your words carefully so that you are praying for the thing that you actually want.

At other times, we pray ineffective prayers by asking for the wrong things. The Bible says, *"...Yet you have not, because you did not ask. You ask, and do receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume [it] upon your lusts."* (**James 4:2-3**) For example, if you ask God to make you rich so you can have nicer things, your prayer is ineffective. A more effective prayer is to ask God to meet your needs and give you extra so that you can be a blessing to others with your generosity. There is nothing wrong with having nice things, but if your motivation in prayer is greed, then your prayer is ineffective.

Still more prayers are ineffective because you might pray with wrong motives. If your purpose for praying is based in pride, bitterness, anger, etc., then your prayer will be ineffective.

You should continually examine your own motivations so that you are praying prayers that will accomplish God's will rather than your own selfish ambitions.

So what are the elements of effective prayer? We have shown that in order to pray prayers that God will say "Yes" to, we must be righteous, fervent, and pray effectively. So let us look at some of the fundamental elements that make a prayer effective. There are four things that will always make your prayers effective. Those things are:

1. The Word of God
2. The Name of Jesus
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Activated faith

If these four things are employed properly, your prayer will bring God's will into reality no matter what your need may be. Remember, God's will is for you to prosper in all matters of life, and be in good health, even as your soul prospers! Also, He has said that He wants to reward those who diligently seek Him. That is, those of us who believe that His promises are absolute evidence that He desires to reward us. So, whenever we stand praying, and dare to **believe** that we **receive** whatever we **ask** for - we WILL have whatever we've asked for!

God does want to say "Yes" to our prayers. *"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 good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11)* However, we do not give our children everything they ask for. Children learn which things they will get from us and which things they will never get. We should be as smart as our children and learn those things to which God will say "Yes" to and avoid asking for those things to which He is obliged to say "No." Faith pleases God! The Prayer of Faith pleases God because it is effective and effectual! Here is a check list. Ask the following questions:

1. Am I righteous?
2. Is my prayer fervent?
3. Is my prayer effective?

- ❖ Is my prayer based on God's Word?
- ❖ Am I praying in the name of Jesus?
- ❖ Am I seeking the assistance of the Holy Spirit?
- ❖ Is my faith active?

4. Am I trying to violate someone's free will?
5. Is there any sin in my life?
6. Are my motives pure?
7. Has my relationship with God developed to the point that I know which things He will say "Yes" to?

THE PRAYER LIFE OF JESUS

One way we can learn to pray effectively is by looking at the prayer life of Jesus. Although the Gospels don't provide a detailed biography of Christ, they do offer captivating glimpses into His prayer life. First, however, it will be helpful to answer a valid question, "Why did Jesus pray?" This is sometimes puzzling for Christians. After all, if Jesus is God, why did Christ need to pray? In my opinion, there are three reasons why Jesus prayed. First, Jesus prayed as an 'example' to His followers, and this should be our point of reference. Second, the Incarnation consists of both divine and human natures. Therefore, from His human (Jewish) nature, it was perfectly natural for Jesus to pray. Third, the constitution of the Godhead (the Holy Trinity) allows for communication between its three Members. As God the Son, Jesus could pray to God the Father at will. This aside let us now look more closely at the prayer life of Jesus.

Jesus and Prayer

- **Jesus prayed 'for' others.** In **Matthew 19:13**, we read, "*Then little children were brought to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them.*" The Lord did this despite His disciples having already rebuked those who had brought them. Jesus was adamant that the little children should not be hindered in any way... "*For the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these*" (verse 14). In **John 17:9** we read, "*I (Jesus) pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours.*" This underscores the need for intercessory prayer. **1 Timothy 2:1** confirms it, "*First, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all.*"
- **Jesus prayed 'with' others.** **Luke 9:28** reads, "*Jesus took Peter, John and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray.*" Jesus prayed alone as we'll, but He also knew the value of praying with others. **Acts 1:14** highlights the importance of us praying with one another: "*They all joined together constantly in prayer.*" Praying together is doing what Jesus did! But notice He didn't just pray with any Tom, Dick and Harry - He prayed with those closest to Him! One of the real challenges we have in our contemporary, busy lives is finding time to be together as a family. It is especially difficult to create opportunities to pray together. The most important part of family prayer is perhaps the easiest to overlook - how we lift each other up to the Lord. Even when we are not physically together, as a praying family, we should pray for each other constantly.

- **Jesus prayed alone.** **Luke 5:16** reads, "*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*" As much as Jesus understood the value of praying with and for others, He also understood the need to pray alone. **Psalm 46:10** reads, "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" Implying that we don't really get to "know" God until we are in a still quiet place. It's important for us to "be still" before God, but the only way to do this, especially in our hectic existence, is to do so 'alone' with God. This is a place of intimacy, where true relationship can be established with our Heavenly Father.

- **Jesus prayed in nature.** **Psalm 19:1** reads, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.*" What better place to commune with our Creator than among the wonders of nature? **Luke 6:12** says, "*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray...*" The Lord could have gone to a home, a synagogue, or if He were near Jerusalem, He could have gone to the temple to pray. But there were times when Jesus chose nature! He made the decision to pray outdoors (in the wilderness), which often happened to be close to His present location. We are surrounded by so much that is "man made" that sometimes it's difficult for us to remember that this is not our world, but God's world (**Genesis 1:1, Psalm 24:1**) full of wonders for us to enjoy.

- **Jesus prayed regularly.** This insight is found in a passage we referred to earlier, **Luke 5:16**: "*Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*" The word "often" is not hidden, therefore, it is obvious that Jesus prayed regularly. Throughout the Gospels, whenever we get a glimpse of Jesus' lifestyle, prayer comes up regularly and naturally. It was simply a part of His worldview, integrated into every aspect of Christ's life. Can we say the same about prayer in our lives?

- **Jesus' prayers differed.** He could pray as a sprinter or a marathon runner. The Lord's Prayer is full of wisdom, but it is easy enough to be memorised and serves as an example of a brief prayer rather than a marathon prayer. However, Jesus also knew how to dedicate long periods of time to prayer. As we read in **Luke 6:12**, Jesus "*spent the night praying to God.*" We, too, need to be able to offer short prayers, as well as to dedicate long periods of our lives to prayer.

- **Jesus' prayers were heartfelt** - Jesus did not pray in a cold, insincere or distant manner, but with heartfelt requests and petitions - demonstrating empathy and a genuine love for God the Father. This is demonstrated clearly in **John 17**, where Jesus prays for Himself, His immediate disciples, as well as for all believers (you and me). *"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world"* - verse 24.
- **Jesus prayed based on knowledge.** That is, His knowledge of God and His truths. The prayers of Jesus were based on God's revealed truths and, as such, were always in line with God's Word. In **John 4:24** Jesus said, *"God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."* He also said, *"The truth will set you free"* (**John 8:32**), underscoring the importance of truth in the life of Christ and, in turn, our lives. Proper prayer requires us to have a significant and truthful understanding of God and what He has revealed to us through His Word.
- **Jesus taught persistence in prayer.** *"Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up"* (**Luke 18:1**). The parable Jesus shared is not meant to depict a pestering disciple who harasses God enough to coerce a response, but rather the importance of being persistent in prayer and waiting on God. Persistence is an integral part of the Christian life. Without persistence and patience you cannot act in a mature fashion. And God is looking for people who can take charge of their inheritance in a way that is pleasing to Him.
- **Jesus knew that not all His prayers would be answered.** For most of us, this is a difficult prayer lesson to learn, but the fact of the matter is that not all our prayers are answered in ways we expect. Even Jesus knew this hard lesson as he cried out to God the Father from Gethsemane (**Matthew 26:36-44**). Three times Jesus prayed for God to allow an easier path, but Jesus knew, *"Yet not as I will, but as You will"* (26:39). Unanswered prayer is such a challenge to the Christian life that we will address the matter in more detail next chapter. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, *"Yet not as I will, but as You will,"* He offered a tremendous, but seemingly simple insight into prayer: God is in charge! Therefore, it's pointless praying against His will.

To recap:

1. Jesus prayed 'for' others.
2. Jesus prayed 'with' others.
3. Jesus prayed alone.
4. Jesus prayed in nature.
5. Jesus prayed regularly
6. Jesus' prayers differed.
7. Jesus' prayers were heartfelt.
8. Jesus prayed based on knowledge.
9. Jesus taught persistence in prayer.
10. Jesus knew that not all His prayers would be answered.

If we are to learn from the **prayer life of Jesus** – and there is much to learn – we need to keep this fundamental principle in mind. A disciple asked Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to pray,*" (**Luke 11:1**) and consequently he was taught the Lord's Prayer. Have you ever asked Jesus to teach you how to pray? **Romans 8:26** tells us that when we do not know "what to pray for" the Holy Spirit will assist us... "*For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" Notice, it says nothing about "how" to pray. Maybe you should do what the disciples did and ask the Lord outright, "Lord teach me HOW to pray as I ought!"

Be rest assured, the One who is pleading your case in the throne room of grace right now (The Lord Jesus Christ) is able to respond to that request. But He doesn't only want to respond; He wants to teach you HOW to pray so that God the Father will answer every prayer.

LORD JESUS, TEACH US HOW TO PRAY!

THE ANSWERS TO UNANSWERED PRAYERS

We have all had the experience of unanswered prayer. We pray for God's healing for a loved one. We pray for God to bring revival to our churches. We pray for financial prosperity. Yet, there are times when nothing seems to change even though God has promised us, "*Ask and you will receive.*" It may even lead us to question whether Jesus is being totally truthful when He says, "*If you ask me anything in My name, I will do it*"?

We will never have all the answers to unanswered prayer, but the story of the exodus provides us with some important perspectives when heaven appears to be in silent mode. In **Exodus 2:23**, Israel cries out for God to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt. "*The people of Israel groaned because they were slaves. They also cried out to God. Their cry for help went up to Him.*" The people waited for twelve long chapters, a wait that must have seemed like forever, before God completely answered their prayers. What we learn from their waiting will help us the next time we are struggling with unanswered prayer - or when God's answer is not what we have asked for or expected.

1. We need to remember that God is answering our prayers even before we've prayed them.

Before any of God's people ever pray for deliverance, He has already begun the process of providing a deliverer. A baby at the beginning of chapter two is the unknown answer to the prayer at the end of chapter two. Even when Moses goes from being a prince in Egypt to a fugitive in Midian, there is a reminder that God has a special purpose for Moses' life. As He does for all of our lives!

When you're waiting for an answer to prayer it helps to remember that God already has the answer worked out before you're even aware that you have a need, or are able to articulate the words of your prayers. God knows the beginning, middle, and end of every circumstance and situation. Jesus reminds you that "*your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*" Israel needed a deliverer and the Lord knew about it before Israel even asked.

2. We need to remember God's loving care and concern even when our prayers are not being answered.

God's complete answer to Israel's prayer doesn't come in for twelve long chapters, but notice what follows immediately in verse 24 — a reminder of God's genuine concern for His people. As soon as Israel "groans" and "cries," God "hears." God is immediately touched by the cry of His people. You don't have to use a magic formula to get God's attention. You don't have to build up enough faith to earn His answer. You don't have to bully God into giving in. God is concerned at the very moment you come to Him with your needs because you belong to Him.

3. We need to remember that when we pray, things may get worse before they get better.

In the story of the exodus, the children of Israel prayed and things got a lot worse before they ever started to get better. In Exodus Moses tells the Pharaoh, "*Let my people go!*" The Pharaoh's response was not to say, "*Thank you, Moses, for bringing this gross injustice to my attention. I'll start the paperwork to expedite their release right away.*" His response was to take away the straw that the Hebrews had used to make bricks.

Moses' career as a labor union negotiator did not get off to a brilliant start. The Pharaoh became more hard-hearted and oppressive than ever! Right before the ultimate deliverance at the Red Sea, Israel was between a rock and a hard place — the Red Sea in front of them and the Egyptian army behind them. God chose not to answer fully and finally until things were as bad as they could possibly be.

God has the freedom to answer our prayers in ways that we don't anticipate or understand. His promise to answer prayer is not a guarantee that we will have a smooth and easy life with no bumps in the road. The reality is that God sometimes responds to prayer by allowing more difficulty into our lives. That adversity produces character, develops faith, and drives us to seek God with more zeal. The difficulty may even become the means by which God answers our prayers, just like it was for the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.

4. We need to remember that unanswered prayer isn't an indication of God's lack of power.

The delay in Israel's answer to prayer had nothing to do with God experiencing a power shortage. God's power is all over the book of Exodus and the Pharaoh found out the hard way who had the real power. Unanswered prayer doesn't void the omnipotence of God. There is nothing we can ask God that is beyond His ability to accomplish, but the greatest demonstrations of God's power are often found in His answers to our unanswered prayers. We see in the exodus that the power of God is not something placed at Israel's disposal with the flip of a switch or the pull of a lever. The how and when of God's answer to prayer is determined by what brings Him the greatest amount of glory. When God answered, it was done in a way that even Pharaoh himself could not deny that Yahweh was God over all!

When we pray, we pray to the same God as these Hebrew slaves. Whether God's answer to our prayers is "Yes," "No," or "Wait," His answers are always the perfect expression of His love and power in our lives.

So remember this... Some of the greatest demonstrations of God's power (that we can ever experience), come in God's answers to our unanswered prayers. This is called the sovereign will of God! He is a Sovereign God who can cut across any human request or petition and bring it in line with His will. God the Father desires for every one of His children to receive what is good and beneficial to them - in the context of their divine destiny. That is, His plans and purposes!

Yes, God will answer you unanswered prayers. And the answers may not be what you expect, but they will be more beneficial and more exciting because they are totally in line with His plans and purposes! Hallelujah!

THE MODEL PRAYER

A former Archbishop said: *“People tell me that answers to prayer are merely coincidences. I can only reply that when I pray coincidences happen, and when I stop praying they stop happening.”* Someone else once wrote, *“If a matter is not serious enough to pray about, then it’s not serious enough to worry about; and if it is serious enough to pray about, and you have prayed, then there is no need to worry about it.”*

Lets look at **Matthew 6 verses 9-13**: *“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done , oln earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

This is the Model Prayer. It is God’s priorities in 65 words. In general, there are three things that we may observe, concerning this divine prayer:

- First, that it contains all we can reasonably and realistically pray for. There is nothing which we have need for, nothing which we can ask for (without offending God), that is not included, either directly or indirectly, in this comprehensive outline for prayer.
- Second, that it contains all we can reasonably and realistically desire. That is, whatever is for the glory of God, and whatever is needful or profitable for all. And indeed, our prayers are the proper test of our desires. What we may not pray for, neither should we desire! What we are not at liberty to pray for, we are not at liberty to desire!
- Third, that it contains all our duty and service to God and man: That is, whatever things are pure and holy; whatever God requires of us; whatever is acceptable in His sight; and whatever may profit our neighbour. Such things are all expressed or implied in this passage.

In these five verses we have what is called **“The Lord’s Prayer.”** However, when using this title we should remember that Jesus never prayed it Himself. It was given to His disciples as a ‘model’ after which they could pattern their daily prayers.

It was not given as the exact words they were to use when praying (verse 7 rules this out), because many words repeated by memory become just empty babbling. The Lord's Prayer is the model prayer. It's an outline for personal worship, intercession, petition, warfare and praise, and it covers 7 major topics. Each topic representing a basic human need.

1. The Paternal Need - "Our Father..." A basic human need to have intimacy with the very person who's seed brought about your existence. Jesus relates this to God as the Father of all creation. However, "*our Father*", more than anything, reveals a new note of familiarity with Yahweh. A connection between God and His creation that's founded on love but grounded on intimacy. **Romans 8:15** confirms this, "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry 'Abba, Father'.*" The Holy Spirit grants us subjective assurance that we are children of God. Note, Abba is an Aramaic word for Father, however, it denotes intimate familiarity, and it is probably best translated "Daddy." Therefore, when you pray, all your needs are met through the generosity of a loving Daddy.

Remember, the paternal need embraces mother, brother and sister. "*Our Father...*" When you became a Christian you became part of a world-wide family – the church. In Christ, everyone has the same Father. **Ephesians 4:6** says, "*One God and Father of all.*" St Augustine said, "*You cannot have God as your Father without having the Church as your mother.*"

"Our Father in heaven..." Prayer should be addressed to God the Father in acknowledgement of His sovereignty over the universe. **Psalms 66:5, 7** declares, "*Come and see the mighty works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men... We will rejoice in Him, for He rules by His power forever. His eyes observe the nations*"

2. The Father's Presence - "Hallowed be Your name..." "*Hallowed be,*" establishes the principle of prayer on the precept of worship. It unveils the importance of inviting God's presence into your prayers through worship. "*God inhabits the praises of His people*" (**Psalms 100:4**). Praying to the Father demands:

- (a) That you engage a heart that's full of adoration;
- (b) That you pray with an expressive heart;
- (c) That your heart yearns to draw near to Him.

It simply means having a heart of worship! David, in **Psalm 63**, rejoiced in the presence of God saying, *"Oh God. You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory."* Therefore, you too should remember to begin your prayers with worship, ascribing praise and honour to Him who is so worthy. Praising God for who He is and thanking God for what He's done!

3. The Father's Priorities - "Your kingdom come..." After worship, you should pray for the advancement of the Father's cause. Declaring His kingdom priorities - putting His interests first. You should be praying that His kingdom "values" shall be established in yourself, your loved ones, your church and your nation. **Romans 14:17** declares, *"For the kingdom of God is not eating or drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* The Father's priorities are also His will. **"Your will be done..."** As you pray that His kingdom values are established in your life, you must acknowledge that God knows what is best and surrender your will to His. This in turn expresses a longing to see His will revealed throughout the world.

"On earth as it is in heaven..." A phrase that refines all three preceding petitions concerning God's priorities and purpose. The worship of God, the sovereign rule by God, and the performance of His will, are all a reality in heaven. Your prayer is therefore, that the same conditions may exist on earth as they do in heaven. So that heavenly affections will extend beyond your personal life and into your home, relationships and into the structures of society. Why? Because this is the Father's heart - it's His priority for you and me.

4. The Father's Provision - "Give us this day our daily bread..." After placing God's interests first you are now permitted to present your own needs. *"Give us this day our daily bread..."* Jesus, who is fully committed to meeting your every need, tells you to pray daily - asking the Father to supply all your needs. However, in **Luke 11:11** Jesus says this, *"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? (verse 13) "... If you then, being carnal, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"* Implying that the Holy Spirit is the best gift you can receive because your primary needs are "spiritual." However, lesser gifts are also available and can be freely asked for.

The Father-heart of God desires to bless His children and He delights in their prosperity. So be assured, God will respond every time you ask something of Him "in Jesus name."

Ask and you will receive! Praying this way confirms your total dependence on God for your daily food - both spiritual and physical. But please note, “daily bread” represents your immediate ‘needs’ and not your convenient ‘wants’. Therefore, in prayer, you must differentiate between what you ‘want’ and what you ‘need’, for they are entirely different.

5. The Father’s Forgiveness - “*And forgive us...*” You are in need of God’s forgiveness but you also need to forgive others. Therefore, your daily goal should be to walk in love and forgiveness, and your prayers should always reflect this. God holds you fully accountable because He first forgave - He took the initiative when you were still in your sin. In a family setting, this verse refers to the parental forgiveness that is very necessary if fellowship with the Father is to be maintained. If you are unwilling to forgive your brothers and sisters, then how can you expect to have fellowship with the Father (who has freely forgiven you).

Forgiveness is qualified by your readiness to forgive personal grievances. Forgiveness is one of the most personal actions you can choose to take. What’s interesting is that the Greek word for “debtor” has nothing to do with finances. A “debtor” is someone who owes a moral obligation - a moral transgressor. It’s someone who has violated the code of ethics; failing in performance. A delinquent! Hence, you are directed to pray that God forgives you for violating His commandments. But only as you forgive others for breaking their moral obligations toward you. In fact, God is saying that He will set you free when and if you set others free!

6. The Father’s Protection - “*And lead us not into temptation...*” Or, ‘lead us away from all our own evil desires’. This petition expresses a healthy distrust of your own ability to resist temptation and to stand up under trials. It acknowledges complete dependence on the Father for protection and preservation. Especially in the face of temptation! However, the first thing you need to understand is that temptation is quite normal - it happens to everybody. We are all in the same boat. It is therefore, how you respond to temptation that matters and not the temptation itself.

“*But deliver us from the evil one...*” This is a heart-cry for daily salvation from the power of satan in your life. It is the prayer of all who desperately desire to be protected against evil by the power of God. So pray a hedge of protection around yourself and your loved ones, and verbally put on the whole armour of God - and do it every day!

7. The Father's Partnership - "For yours is the kingdom..." This represents divine partnership. End your prayers by praising God for sharing His kingdom, power and glory with you (**2 Timothy 4:18**). In **John 17:22**, Jesus declares, *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one as We are one."* By ending every prayer time with an acknowledgement that you are a "joint heir" with Jesus, then you remind yourself of the awesome authority you have in Christ. **Romans 8:17** states, *"And if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."*

"For your is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever" - the sovereign right over all things that are or ever were created. Yes, His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures throughout all ages. **"The power"** - the executive power whereby He governs all things in His everlasting kingdom, whereby He does whatever is pleasing to Him, in all places of His dominion. **"And the glory"** - the praise due from every creature, for His power, and the mightiness of His kingdom, and for all His wondrous works which He works from everlasting to everlasting. And shall do, **"for ever and ever! Amen!"** So be it!

I'd like to end this chapter by focusing on a statement Jesus made at the beginning of this the Model Prayer. Jesus' words **"Your kingdom come"** are more than a suggestion to pray for a distant millennial day, because everything in this pray is in fact current! As mentioned, this prayer is not a formula for repetition so as it is an outline for expansion. Worship is to be longer than a sentence. Our petitions are not to be confined to bread. Forgiveness is to be requested in specifics, not generalities. And prayer for the entry of God's kingdom into present earthborn situations is not accomplished in a momentary utterance. The verb, mood and tense of "Your kingdom come" essentially says, *"Father let Your kingdom come here and now!"*

Such prayerful intervention is called prevailing prayer! Motivation toward such prayer occurs when we recognise the importance Jesus placed on prayer. Without the intervention of God's kingdom rule through prayer, earth's circumstances will succumb to inevitable negative consequences. Diverse scenes of human need must be penetrated by God's "will" - "here on earth as it is heaven." Either the weakness of man's rule (the flesh) or the viciousness of the devil's works will prevail. God's power alone can change things and bring heaven's rule instead. However, praying is ours to do - this is our responsibility. Unless we ask for the intervention of His kingdom and obey His prayer-lessons, nothing is going to change. All "kingdom ministry" begins with, is sustained by, and will triumph through, **prevailing prayer**.

FASTING AND PRAYING

In this final chapter we will be examining “Fasting and Praying.” The definition of fasting; it is a voluntary withdrawing from food and/or drink, or other fleshly appetite, for a specified period of time. The first mention of a fast in scripture is **Exodus 34:28** *“And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Write these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel’. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.”* When Moses received the 10 Commandments from God, he engaged in a 40 day fast. You may have noticed it said he didn’t eat OR drink! Don’t any of you try that! It is a human impossibility apart from divine intervention. Some have worked up to a 40 day fast from food, but no one could survive 40 days with no drink. This was a miracle! There are three basic types of fasting mentioned in the Bible:

1. Normal fast. Jesus began His earthly ministry with prayer and fasting. **Matthew 4:1-2**, *“a forty day fast Jesus completed!”* Jesus taught His disciples to fast - *“Moreover when (not if) you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance”* (**Matthew 6:16**). Though fasting is never commanded, Jesus assumed that the disciples would want to in order to see great things happen! But it’s not something a Christian has to do, but can choose to do. And not many guidelines are given in scripture about fasting, either! A normal fast is no food, only liquids like water, juice, etc. and it can last for 1 day (that’s a good place to start); 3 days (Paul did this right after getting saved); or 40 days (many examples in Bible). Several men alive today have done a 40 day fast and have said it was absolutely life-changing!

2. Partial fast. Good if you have diabetes, hypoglycemia or some other condition which precludes a normal fast. In the partial fast you omit certain foods for a while, but not others. Daniel and three Hebrew children did a partial fast, and at the end were stronger and healthier than those eating what they wanted. Elijah did this on two occasions. John Wesley was well known for going days on end eating only bread and water. Others give up meats for a time, eating only vegetables. Some just skipping a meal to spend time in prayer. All the above are examples of a partial fast

3. The absolute fast. Moses went on this kind for 40 days; nothing enters your mouth at all! It can be done for a very short time; however, I would consult your doctor before attempting an absolute fast!

What is the purpose of fasting?

It is a way to seek God by denying the physical in order to focus on the spiritual. So for this reason prayer and fasting must always go together, or it does you no good spiritually! Of course, there are physical benefits: medical doctors are discovering more and more benefits to fasting because the body is designed to heal itself on a cellular level. Therefore, as we eat and take in various toxins, processed foods, medicines, etc., we hold a certain amount of poisons in our cells. but when we fast many of those things are flushed out of our system! However, if you want a spiritual benefit, make sure and take the time you would have in eating and transfer it to 'prayer time'! **2 Chronicles 20: 3**, *"And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."*

Ezra 8: 23, *"So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us."* **Nehemiah 1:4**, *"And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."* **1 Corinthians 7:5**, *"Defraud you not one to the other, except it be with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinence."* Another point made by this verse is that when we fast it ought to be from ALL physical desires, not just food! Let go of the physical, focus on the spiritual! Usually we only fast and pray when we have a special need.

God's nine main purposes for fasting:

1. Fasting to get freedom from addictions and compulsive habits: Isaiah 58:6 *"loose the bands."* These are things you'd like to lay down but have been unable to. "I've tried to quit smoking, but I can't!" Try fasting! God wants us to get serious about walking in victory, and we can help establish it through fasting.

2. Fasting to solve problems: When it seems hopeless, there's no way out - fast! In an instant, God can deal with the very things that have stressed you for weeks and months!

3. Fasting for revival and soul winning: Isaiah 58:6, *"Let the oppressed go free."* I challenge you to try it this week! Fast and pray for your unsaved loved ones and friends.

4. Fasting to conquer mental and emotional problems: Isaiah 58:6, *“break every yoke.”*

I’ve never seen so many people stressed out, under such emotional strain as this year! The world has changed!

5. Fasting to meet the physical needs of others: This can be for someone’s bare necessities to be met, or even to feed the poor!

6. Fasting for clearer insight in decision-making: This is different to problem-solving. It is when you’re seeking God’s will in a major area of life. You’re at a junction in the road and don’t know which way to turn. **Isaiah 58:8** *“Let light break forth.”* It’s like God has turned the light on and you suddenly know what to do!

7. Fasting for health reasons or healing: Is there a loved one that’s really ill? Get serious and fast for them! When there’s no hope from a human perspective, put it in capable God’s hands. It’s His will to honour your prayers. **Isaiah 58:8,** *“Your health shall spring forth speedily.”*

8. Fasting for a more righteous life and influential testimony: Isaiah 58:8 *“Your righteousness shall go before you.”* It’s easy for a Christian to grow cold. If that happens to you, just say to the Lord, *“light a fire under me! Make me like I was when I was first saved!”* If you get serious enough to deny yourself in the physical realm, it will be amazing what God will do in your soul spiritually!

9. Fasting for protection against the evil one: If you or a loved one are under Satanic oppression, or possession, then it’s time to fast and pray! The devil doesn’t want us to do this because it’s so powerful. Jesus said to His disciples in **Mark 9:29,** *“This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”* How powerful is that?

Prayer and fasting increase the faith and the anointing in our lives. When the enemy comes like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the standard against him! (**Isaiah 59:19**). So Christians need to prepare themselves when there are stronger demons around!

The disciples were trying to cast out the demons in a young man’s life but they couldn’t (**Mark 9:17-18**). Religious lives and shallow commitments to Jesus will not stand when demons come like a flood! Jesus rebuked His disciples for being faithless and perverse! That was why they couldn’t cast out the demons.

These are the Words of our Master: *"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting!"* There is nothing else we can do about certain demons. But be careful, there are some modern versions of the Bible that remove "fasting." Just by prayer alone is not accurate!

Fasting will empower your prayers. Everyone can pray but not everyone can fast! Fasting is humbling one's self before God. This is denying ourselves in order to let the Holy Spirit lead us. We can never truly "die to self" without fasting.

Sowing to the Spirit

Fasting is probably the greatest avenue for enabling us to be sensitive and responsive to the Spirit of God. God is always speaking to us in one way or another. However, only those who are sensitive and responsive enough to Him can effectively hear him. Our Lord Jesus said fasting would be necessary for His disciples after He ascended. *"The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast"* (**Matthew 9:15**). The early disciples remembered the words of their master and thus they made fasting vital. The outstanding work God accomplished through them speaks for itself. They could easily hear God speak to them in their moments of fasting. *"While they were worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set a part for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' "* (**Acts 13:2**).

What's more, the ministry of Paul started after a period of fasting and praying. *"So after they fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."* Maybe something is about to be birthed through you having fasted and prayed!

Remember the story when Jesus took Peter, James and John to the mountain and they were without food and drink for some days – instead, they prayed! Prayer and fasting is just like going up the mountain! This proved too much for Peter and his two friends – they were tired and they fell asleep. This is the place where the 'flesh' could no longer stand. But here's the most important thing to note; when the 'flesh' gives up – God appears! When Peter, James and John suddenly woke up, they saw Jesus in His glory with Moses and Elijah! The disciples were so amazed that they didn't want to leave the mountain.

Prayer and fasting will take you to a place where God reveals Himself to you. That's where the anointing and faith increase upon our lives and the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the standard to come against the devil and his evil accomplices.

Yes, we can pray of course, but faithless prayers and perverse lives will not stand the onslaught of the enemies of God! It all depends on what level you want to take your battle with the enemy to. Do you want to be on the attacking side or the defensive side? I tell you, the devil will not leave you alone until he destroys you and everything you have!

Go into fasting and prayer now to prepare yourself for battle! If there is anything concerning you and your family that appears ongoing and threatening; sickness, a curse, poverty, fear and the like – demons are probably behind these things! However, prayer and fasting (in the name of Jesus) will give you victory over them!

Fasting is the most powerful spiritual discipline of all the Christian disciplines. Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform your life. Fasting and prayer can also work on a much grander scale. According to Scripture, and observation, I am convinced that when God's people fast with a proper Biblical motive - seeking God's face, not His hand - with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit, God will hear from heaven and heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation and world. Fasting and prayer can bring about a change in the direction of our nation. God's awesome power can be released through you as you fast and pray by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

This is the spirit of **2 Chronicles 7:14**: *"If my people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

Please understand, it is not a must to fast - as in making it a sin if one doesn't. But Jesus said, *"When you fast..."*, implying that it's an essential Christian discipline. People are not obligated to fast but they could be limited in experiencing blessings that can be realised in their lives only through both prayer and fasting.