

FIVE LEVELS OF PRAYER

Level 3 - Seeking the Face of God

"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" (II Chronicles 7:14).

It is interesting to note that prayer and seeking God's face are listed separately. Prayer is not necessarily seeking the face of God. It could be seeking the hands of God. It could be maintenance prayer --to keep what we already have in God. Seeking the face of God involves more than that!

Seeking the face of God is a higher level of prayer than the one hour wonder. (Sometimes we wonder why we don't get more results.) It involves doing whatever it takes to get the answer! It often involves humbling ourselves before God--and sometimes men. Often it involves getting our relationship with God right--and also our relationship with others:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

The one hour prayer is often done because of the right reasons--a desire to live for God and see the church experience revival, but, as we have already stated, it is expecting too much for too little a price.

It takes an hour of prayer just to live right. One hour prayer is maintenance prayer. We have got to get it out of our thinking that we have accomplished something great because we have prayed for an hour. Most of us spend more time than that feeding the natural man. The one hour prayer does not leave sufficient time to intercede for the lost and war with the devil!

Nevertheless, for some, this might be all that they feel they can pray. But there is another group that possess a divine dissatisfaction. They have an intense hunger for a closer walk with God at any cost, revival at any cost. They are people like David:

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" (Psalm 42:1-3).

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (Psalm 63:1-2).

They are people like Jacob, who started out young trying to obtain a higher position in God:

"He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us" (Hosea 12:3-4).

This is not normal prayer. He didn't just go through a form of praying to fill an hour or two with one eye on the clock. He wrestled with God until the answer came. God loves people who have a spiritual thirst after the things of

God that cause them to take action, rather than sit around and talk about them. He said concerning Jacob and Esau:

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"
(Romans 9:13).



Esau had no regard for spiritual things, but Jacob lived for them. He made a lot of mistakes in his life, but God loved him because he had a heart that appreciated the things of God (such as the birthright and the blessing). Yet, the spiritual high of Jacob's life was not when he bought his brother's birthright for a morsel of food, or when, with the help of his mother, he stole his blessing.

It was not when he slept all night on a stone for a pillow, and dreamed about angels ascending and descending upon a ladder stretched from earth to heaven. His spiritual high came when he stayed awake all night, wrestling with God in persistent prayer, not letting go until the circumstances were changed (his brother was on the way to kill him with four hundred men), his name was changed (from Jacob, which means "deceiver, " to Israel, which means "prince of God"), and most important of all, he was changed!

THREE LEVELS OF PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Four hundred thousand children of Israel were ready to war against 26,700 men from the tribe of Benjamin. They knew that prayer was the right deed to do before they went to battle, so that is what they did:

"And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first" (Judges 20:18).

Their five-second prayer received no assurance of victory. In fact, they never asked for it! As a result, 22,000 children of Israel lost their lives on the first day of battle.

"And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the Lord said, Go up against him" (verse 23).

They added some tears to their prayers, but once again the children of Israel were defeated, and 18,000 men were killed, all because they did not stay in the place of prayer until they received the assurance of victory! When victory comes, tears of self-pity turn to shouts of joy. In fact, tears of self-pity do not impress God. They can be a sign of unbelief!

"Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And the LORD said, Go up; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand" (verses 26-28).

This time they showed true remorse for their sins and spiritual laziness by offering sacrifices. They waited in the presence of the Lord until the assurance came, and then they went up and conquered their enemies!

Seeking God's face includes whatever it takes to bring the assurance of victory. The "sweet hour of prayer" does not allow time to wait upon God for this assurance. It could require some all night prayer meetings alone with God.

Please take note that praying together with others is good, but it does not take the place of being alone with God. Jesus left the multitudes, even his disciples, in order to be alone during his time of prayer.

Seeking God's face will often include fasting. This could be a fast of a day or two, or even two or three weeks. God is able to give guidance in this matter. He is also able to give sufficient strength to the one who fasts according to the will of God.

Seeking God's face includes searching our own heart (Psalm 139:23). If our heart is not right with God, any prayer but the prayer of repentance is in vain. David said, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psalm 66:18).

Jesus wants to greatly empower us with His presence. He wants to give us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and use us all in a great way. But our motives must be purified. We must empty ourselves of ourselves, so that He can fill us with Himself.

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:20-22).

Jesus said of the Pharisees, *"They think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"* (Matthew 6:7). Seeking the face of God is far more than speaking words. It is a heart crying out for a closer relationship with God. The term "seeking the face of God" has the meaning that we seek His smile of approval in all things.

If you don't possess much spiritual hunger for God, pray for it. If you do have a strong thirst for God, act upon it. Expand your prayer time. Seek more opportunities to pray. I have found that I can pray in an airplane thousands of feet above the sea, in a taxi speeding down the Kuala Lumpur to Seremban highway, sitting in a corner of a waiting room in the airport, and in dozens of other places and situations--if I really want to pray.

We are all busy people, right? But if we are spiritually thirsty, if we are sick and tired of being sick and tired, if we truly want to be used of God, we will find many opportunities to pray. For example, how about fasting during your lunch hour so that you will have that extra hour to spend together with God? Stuck in a travel jam? Great, it's better to pray than to lose our patience!

CHOOSE YOUR FELLOWSHIP

You have an opportunity to choose whom you wish to spend your time with. Jesus, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, bids you enter His throne room at any time of the day or night. Your heavenly Father is pleased when you "curl up on His lap" and have fellowship with Him.

Although we need to spend time with our family--our husband, or wife, and children, we will be a better husband or wife if we spend much time with Jesus. Sometimes family members or friends get jealous of the time we spend alone with God. We must strive to make sure that we do not neglect them, but there are only so many hours in the day, and it is extremely important that we take time (you never find time) for Jesus!

If you are always having visitors coming at night which steal your prayer time, put Jesus first. Simply say, "I'm sorry, I have an appointment that must be kept." Then give them a book or a magazine, and tell them what time you will be finished.

BE CONSISTENT!

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplications for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (quit, or become weak)" (Luke 18:1).

There is no special time for prayer that is best for all people, because all people are different. Reverend T. F. Tenney underscored this truth in a way I will never forget. He said, "My wife has tea with the Lord in the morning, I have popcorn with Him at midnight."

Even if you are a "night person," It is certainly good to spend at least a few minutes in prayer when you first wake up, to acknowledge your need of the Lord from the very beginning of the day. Daniel and David prayed three times each day (Daniel 6:10; Psalm 55:7). We will really begin to live, however, when we learn how to fill every spare moment with a prayer, praise, and intercession.

"Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

Again, if you have a strong, spiritual desire, cultivate it! Obey the call to prayer that comes to you any hour of the day or night.

"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek" (Psalm 27:8). ds

<http://www.sayadi-al-nas.com>