

The Keys to Dynamic Prayer

Prayer is vital to the spiritual life of Christians. It is one of the five tools of Christian growth. Yet this tool is under-utilized and greatly misapplied. Many profess to be Christian and never pray. Others say their prayers go unanswered. Here are the keys to dynamic prayer!

CHRISTIANS PRAY. Prayer is talking to God. Do you know how to talk to God?

God is your Father. As His child, you must speak, talk—pray—to Him.

This is far more important than you may realize.

Christ taught, “Pray after this manner.” What manner did He—and the Bible—teach?

You need to know—and you can! Here are the steps—the KEYS—to truly effective prayer.

Conditions to Answered Prayer

The Bible is filled with accounts of answered prayers.

Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy rebellious, carnal-minded Israel (Num. 14:11-19). Hannah, who was barren, implored God to give her a child of her own (I Sam. 1:5-11). David beseeched God to forgive him for committing horrendous sins (Psa. 51). And before He was taken to be crucified, Jesus asked God to protect His disciples (John 17:6-11).

God answered their prayers. He will also answer yours.

But there are conditions. You must approach God HIS way, not your own. You need to know how to pray—when—how often—where—and what to pray for. The answers are in God’s Word.

Let’s look at the conditions to answered prayer. The following is not an exhaustive list. Other conditions will be covered or expanded upon later.

Ask in faith: You must believe—have faith. The apostle Paul wrote, “But without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6).

Why? Because “he who comes to God must BELIEVE that He is”—that God exists—“and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (same verse). If you want God to answer your prayers, you must first believe that He exists and that He will hear you. That takes faith.

Christ said, “And all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive” (Matt. 21:22).

The apostle James added, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” (Jms. 1:6-7).

But what is faith? Here is the Bible’s definition: “...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Faith is your PROOF that God will deliver His promises—it is your GUARANTEE that He will come through for you. (To learn more, you may read our booklet *What Is Real Faith?*)

God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). He *always* fulfills His promises. And He promises that if you faithfully turn to Him, He will turn to you (Zech. 1:3)—God *will* answer your prayers.

But you must meet other conditions.

Be diligent: When most people pray (to be healed, find a job, etc.), they ask

God once, maybe twice, and then give up.

But Christ said, “ASK, and it shall be given you; SEEK, and you shall find; KNOCK, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asks RECEIVES; and he that seeks FINDS; and to him that knocks it shall be OPENED. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ASK Him?” (Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13).

Let God know that you are serious about your request.

Keep in mind that He seldom answers prayers in the way or time frame most people expect. God does things His way, according to His timetable.

If a matter is important to you, do not pray about it just once. Come to God again and again, not in a nagging way, but with sincere, heartfelt petitions. Be diligent.

Again, let God know how serious you are.

Pray for God’s will, not your own: In the world, most pray for selfish reasons. Some ask God to bless them in winning the lottery. Others pray that their enemies will get their “just deserts.” But are they seeking God’s will?

Notice James 4: “You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask,

and receive not, because you ask amiss, *that you may consume it upon your lusts*” (vs. 2-3). If your mind is set on foolish, carnal lusts, God will not hear you.

Your requests must be centered on what God desires. The Apostle John wrote, “And this is the confidence that we have in [God], that, if we ask any thing *according to His will*, He hears us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him” (I John 5:14-15).

Just before He was arrested, tortured and crucified, Jesus cried out to God in anguish. He prayed, “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but *as You will*” (Matt. 26:39).

Humanly, Jesus did not want to suffer the brutal torture and death that awaited Him. Yet He still prayed that God’s will be done, not His own. Christ always put God *first*. He always approached Him with a yielded, humble attitude.

Follow Christ’s example and God will answer your prayers.

You can know God’s will by studying His Word. The Bible contains more than a thousand pages and 750,000 words of God’s expressed will. If you study it daily, replacing your thoughts with His, you can understand what God wants.

For example, notice Jeremiah 9: “Thus says the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glories glory in this, that *he understands and knows Me*, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the LORD” (vs. 23-24).

Do your prayers reflect loving-kindness (mercy, out-going concern for others), godly judgment (wisdom based on true biblical understanding), and righteousness (obedience to God’s laws; see Psalm 119:172 and 111:10)?

Have a humble, yielded attitude: The carnal mind is deceitful—even to itself (Jer. 17:9). It is naturally hostile to God and His spiritual laws. It cannot obey Him (Rom. 8:7-8).

This world’s Christianity does not understand this. Its religionists, teachers and leaders do not preach it.

Yet the Bible teaches that God will only listen to those who are teachable, humble and yielded to Him. Notice Isaiah 66: “Thus says the LORD, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that You build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things has My hand made, and all those things have been, says the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is *poor* and of a *contrite spirit*, and *trembles at My Word*” (vs. 1-2).

Jesus used a parable to teach a valuable lesson to “some who trusted in themselves” (Luke 18:9):

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican [tax collector]. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (vs. 10-12). The Pharisee “knew” that He was God’s gift to mankind.

“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (vs. 13). The tax collector saw himself from God’s perspective and humbled himself.

Christ continued, “I tell you, this man [the tax collector] went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that *humbles himself* shall be exalted” (vs. 14).

God will not listen to the prayers of the proud and arrogant.

Keep God’s Law: To begin to understand God’s will, you must obey Him. David wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments” (Psa. 111:10).

The more you obey God, the more understanding He will give you. And the more you receive, the more God expects you to obey Him.

When you do this, God promises, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not”—because we deliberately choose God’s way of life and stop sinning—“then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His command-

ments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (I John 3:21-22).

God listens to those who obey Him. It is that simple.

When Jesus lived on earth, He knew that God would always answer His prayers. Here’s why: “And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29).

If you follow Christ’s footsteps and obey God, your prayers will be answered!

Consider this: “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9). If you do not listen to (and obey) God, He will not listen to you!

Approach God with a clean conscience: When you sin—break God’s laws—He cannot hear you: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

In Psalm 24, David asked, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (vs. 3-4).

He also wrote, “If I regard iniquity [sin] in my heart [mind], the Lord will not hear” (66:18).

Confess your sins before God. Repent and ask for His forgiveness. Christ’s blood will cleanse you.

Some people fall into a dangerous pattern: When they sin, their guilt gnaws at them. They feel too ashamed to approach God in prayer. And God cannot hear a prayer that is never uttered. Because they have not confessed their sins and repented, their sin grows. Soon they are trapped in a cycle of sin. If they do not turn to God soon, their conscience will be seared. They will end up sinning without feeling guilt, shame or fear.

Do not let this happen to you!

The Bible states, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

God has seen men commit every sin imaginable. Your confession cannot shock Him. But it will set you free from

the deadly cycle of sin, pain and, ultimately, death.

Be bold: This world's Christianity pictures Christ as a helpless weakling nailed to a cross.

But the Bible clearly shows that Christ is in heaven, actively working on behalf of His servants: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:14-15).

When we pray to God, we do so by the authority of Jesus Christ. His shed blood allows us to enter the most holy place in the universe—GOD'S THRONE!

That is why, when we pray, we are commanded to "*come boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

God expects our prayers to be bold, full of confidence—in Him, not self.

If we come before God wavering and full of doubt, He will not listen (Jms. 1:6-7).

Pray in detail: Some have reasoned, "Why should I pray? Doesn't God already know everything, including what I think?"

Yes, He does. In fact, God knows you better than you know yourself, down to the number of hairs you have on your head (Matt. 10:30; Luke 12:7).

God knows everything you need even before you ask Him (Matt. 6:8).

He knows your inner thoughts and desires: "I the LORD search the heart [mind], I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruits of his doings" (Jer. 17:10).

Yet God wants you to pray to Him. Here are five reasons why:

(1) God wants you to draw close to Him and show Him where your heart is (Matt. 6:19-21).

(2) He wants you to express outgoing concern for others. Praying for others is an opportunity to do this.

(3) He wants you to prove and test Him by claiming His many promises (Mal. 3:10; I Thes. 5:21).

(4) He wants you to submit your will to Him. If you believe God's Word and

pray from the heart, God's thoughts will saturate your mind. You will come to think—and act—like Him (Eph. 1:17-19).

(5) Like any good parent, God wants to know His children. Specific, highly detailed prayers please God.

Consider this scripture: "And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb [Christ], having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odors [incense], which are the *prayers of saints*" (Rev. 5:8).

Your prayers should be like sweet-smelling incense to God.

To capture its full body of richness and flavor, incense must be beaten and ground into a very fine powder. Likewise, your prayers should be "finely ground"—specific and highly detailed. They should "smell good" to God. But if you are not careful, they could smell like something else.

Prayers that consist of the "gimmes," or that start out with self-righteous attitudes, are a foul stench to God's nostrils, like sulfur dioxide—rotten egg gas—or burned rubber.

Read the inset "Expandable Prayer List" featured with this article. It will help you to present "finely ground incense" before God. It will also assist you in praying for others.

Always thank God: Paul wrote, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thes. 5:18).

You should *always* give thanks to God in your prayers. If you do not, you will miss a vital key to having your prayers answered.

Pray from the heart: When most pray, they mumble a few words and hope for the best. Or, like the Pharisees 2,000 years ago, they give long, monotonous prayers that go no higher than the ceiling (Luke 18:10-12). Either way, they are not putting their hearts into their requests.

Regarding the modern-day descendants of Israel, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "And there is none that calls upon Your name, *that stirs up himself* to take hold of You: for You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us, because of our iniquities" (64:7).

The prophet Hosea adds, "Woe unto them! For they have fled from Me:

Destruction unto them! Because they have transgressed against Me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me. And *they have not cried unto Me with their heart*, when they howled upon their beds" (7:13-14).

Contrast this with what James wrote: "The effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man avails much" (5:16). Always be fervent!

God used the Prophet Elijah as an example (vs. 17-18). Elijah was human, fallible. He had the same passions and frustrations that people still struggle with today.

Yet Elijah was a righteous man—he obeyed God. And when he prayed, he did it from the heart. Study his example in I Kings 17, 18 and 19.

Look at Christ's example: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5:7).

Fervent, heartfelt, sincere prayer gets *results*.

And as you have seen, God's Word shows that there are many conditions for answered prayer. You can discover other conditions by thoroughly studying the Bible.

How to Pray

As with all other doctrines in the Bible, "churchianity" has distorted and misapplied Christ's teaching on how to pray. Misguided theologians have twisted Matthew 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-4. They have led millions into turning Christ's model prayer into a meaningless, word-for-word recitation. This was never Christ's intention!

Let's examine the truth and allow God's Word to speak for itself.

In Matthew 6:5-8, Jesus warns His disciples against praying in order to be seen by men and against vain repetition—repeating the same words in a monotonous, chant-like drone, as millions of "Christians" do today.

Then in verse 9, He states, "After this *manner* therefore pray..." The Greek word for "manner" is *houtos*, meaning "in this way." Christ was not teaching His disciples to follow this prayer word-

for-word. Remember, He commanded them *not* to do that in verse 7.

What Christ was about to teach them was a prayer *outline*—a MODEL prayer—with topics to pray about and the general order they should follow. It is up to the person praying to provide details for each subject.

Let's examine this prayer outline.

“Our Father Which Art in Heaven”

God created us. He is the Master Potter and we are His clay (Isa. 64:8). We are His sons through creation. We are also His spiritually-begotten sons if His Spirit dwells within us (Rom. 8:14).

Christ said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30). We can have the same intimate relationship with God the Father—if His Spirit dwells in us (Rom. 8:9).

All prayers should address His role as our one and only spiritual Father. You can do this by thanking God.

Think of the many blessings He shows upon you daily: Food, drink, shelter, clothes, family, health, employment, protection, understanding His truth, freedom from Satan's deception (Rev. 12:9)—if we remain vigilant.

And yes, even trials. Be thankful when you suffer trials and stumbling-blocks in your life (Jms. 1:2-3). Think of them as opportunities for God to build His holy, righteous character in you. It is the reason you exist! (To learn more, read our booklet *Why Do You Exist?*)

Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 teach, “There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Jeremiah 10:23 adds, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.”

Remember: “The heart [carnal mind] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (17:9). On his own, man cannot correctly determine right from wrong, good from evil. He needs help!

As any good father would, God is actively teaching His children to think, speak and act properly—to wisely discern all matters, big or small, based on His spiritual laws. In other words, He is teaching His sons how to live. Your prayers should appreciate and reflect this understanding.

And remember: Pray to God the Father—never to angels (Col. 2:18).

“Hallowed Be Thy Name”

God has many names and offices. Through them, He fills many roles in our lives.

GOD IS OUR SUSTAINER. He gives us the strength to endure and, if necessary, escape sore trials (I Cor. 10:13).

GOD IS OUR CREATOR. He physically made us in His form and image (Gen. 1:26-27). We have hands for touching, mouths for speaking and tasting, ears for hearing, and eyes for seeing. Because of Him, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14). Do you appreciate this? Then tell God and honor Him as your Creator.

GOD IS OUR HEALER. David wrote: “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities; *who heals all your diseases*” (Psa. 103:2-3).

GOD IS OUR PROVIDER. Every morsel of food you eat comes from Him. So does every piece of clothing you own. Your home. Your car. The air you breathe. Everything you possess comes from God. Use every prayer to thank Him.

GOD IS OUR TEACHER. For the last 6,000 years He has called only a select few to understand His truth (John 6:44, 65; Rom. 8:28-30). While the vast majority of mankind is spiritually blind, God's truth has set us free from the mass deception of the “god of this world” (John 17:17; II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). Thank God for leading you into the fullness of His truth.

Again, God has many names, offices and functions. He is Judge. Love. Long-suffering. Glory. Grace. Perfection. Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is Justice. Power. Righteous. The list goes on.

“Thy Kingdom Come”

This world is filled with appalling evils. Daily news headlines testify to mankind's escalating sins: Domestic violence. Widespread fraud and government corruption. Religious persecution. Out of control sexually-transmitted diseases. And never-ending terrorist alerts that remind us we can no longer say, “It can't happen here.”

Over 50% of U.S. marriages end in divorce. Of those remaining, only half are happy marriages. The traditional

“Ozzie and Harriet” two-parent families are becoming extinct.

Many children today are reared by single parents—or unwed couples “shacking up”—or foster parents—or even homosexual lovers.

No wonder people do not know right from wrong, good from evil, normal from abnormal.

Children are being sexualized by the mass media. Drug use among teens and preteens is skyrocketing. America, Britain, Canada, Australia and all the modern-day nations descended from ancient Israel have produced “strange children” (Hos. 5:7). They have traded true values for valueless political correctness.

The kingdom of God cannot come soon enough. Only God's righteous government, led by Christ, will solve the world's ever-increasing, endless problems. You must pray for Christ's Return.

“Thy Will Be Done in Earth, as it is in Heaven”

Most pray the proverbial “gimme.” Their attitude is “Gimme, gimme, gimme,” instead of “God, give others the things that they need.”

In your prayers, ask for God's will to be done, not yours. Ask Him to guide you through Bible study to learn what He desires.

Ask Him to give you a yielded, humble, teachable attitude so that He can use you as His instrument to help fulfill His Master Plan of salvation for mankind—and that He can spiritually mold His holy, righteous character in you.

Also, ask Him to help you properly accept His answer—even if it is not what you wanted to hear. Sometimes the answer is “No.”

Paul pleaded with God three times to remove a “thorn in the flesh” (II Cor. 12:7-8). God answered, “My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (vs. 9).

In other words, God said, “No.”

Paul did not turn bitter. Instead, he wrote, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake:

for when I am weak, then am I strong” (vs. 9-10).

Paul accepted God’s answer; in fact, he saw wisdom in it.

Ask God to give you the same attitude toward His will.

Also recognize that, when God does answer your prayers, He rarely does so in the way you expect. Accept this. God’s will is greater than yours.

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

After you have put God first in your prayers, then you can pray about your daily needs.

If you need a job, pray for it. If you need to be healed, ask. If you are drowning in a sea of debt, spread your bills before God and seek His help. As long as you “seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33), God will provide for your every need. All you have to do is ask.

But notice that Christ did not say, “Give ME this day MY daily bread.” He said, “Us...our.”

When you pray, remember the needs of others. People who need to be healed, who have lost their jobs, who are suffering marital problems, etc. The more compassion you give to others, the more God will give to you.

“And Forgive Us Our Debts”

All have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Sin is breaking God’s spiritual laws (I John 3:4; Rom. 7:14). And the wages of sin—what we earn for breaking His laws—is death (6:23).

Repent—change your mindset—and turn from the “way that seems right” to you (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

Christ lived in the flesh. He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus knows what it is like to wrestle with our three mortal enemies: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (I John 2:16).

Yet Christ did not sin—even once!

Therefore, since “the blood of Jesus Christ...cleanses us from all sin” (1:7), we can “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

But John warns, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and

the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him [God] a liar, and His word is not in us.” (I John 1:8, 10).

Millions of professing Christians claim that God’s Law was done away—that all they have to do is “believe on Christ.” If the Law does not exist, neither does sin (you cannot break what is not there).

Such thinking is self-deceptive and ridiculous!

Now read verse 9: “If we *confess our sins*, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

God is ready, willing and able to apply the blood of Jesus Christ and take away your debts—free you from the death penalty. All you have to do is repent.

“As We Forgive Our Debtors”

If you want to be forgiven, then you must extend forgiveness to others. That’s right! Forgiveness is tied to forgiveness. If you do not, God will not forgive you: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15).

Many people think that extending forgiveness and mercy is a sign of weakness. They are wrong!

It takes tremendous power to suffer long and suppress carnal-minded thoughts of revenge. It takes God’s Spirit to not find glee in the downfall of those who have done you harm. It takes a humble, yielded, converted mind to show godly mercy and say, “I forgive.”

This is the attitude God expects.

Remember: “For *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” and have earned the death penalty (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Yet, God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:21-23, 32).

God is “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9).

Paul was one of the greatest servants of God who ever lived. He was a man of great endurance and deep understanding.

Yet he sinned, even after decades of being converted.

Notice Romans 7: “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (vs. 14-23).

Paul struggled with the drives, pulls and temptations of the flesh, just as we do today. Remember this.

Pray for others to repent of their sins and weaknesses and to overcome their faults.

“And Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

God does not tempt people. He cannot. Nor does He lead them into temptation. That would go against His very nature. (See Jms. 1:13.)

In the original Greek, “temptation” means “a putting to proof, by experiment or experience; to examine, try.” This is talking about sore trial.

All true Christians must suffer. They must be tried. Otherwise, God could not develop His divine nature in them. Suffering—sore trial—forces God’s people to regularly turn to Him for help and comfort. It produces the fruits of God’s Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control) (Gal. 5:22-23).

When God called Herbert W. Armstrong to conversion, he had to suffer 28 years of abject poverty. This taught Mr. Armstrong to rely on God, not self. It taught him to put his faith in God’s many promises.

And God always came through.

This 28-year sore trial produced results. Over the course of his 52-year ministry, Mr. Armstrong came to be known for two things: (1) He believed God, and (2) he obeyed Him.

As a result, God was able to use Mr. Armstrong to take the gospel to one-third of all the presidents, rulers and heads of state on earth—and hundreds of millions heard his voice!

Even Christ—who never sinned—had to suffer: “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:7-8).

Because Christ endured sore trials and suffering, He was “made perfect” and “became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (vs. 9).

Suffering yields results!

But this does not mean we should be gluttons for punishment. Christ understands this. That is why He tells us to pray, “Lead us NOT into temptation [sore trial].”

Instead, ask God to correct you. There is a difference between correction and sore trial.

God knows you better than you do. He sees your faults, shortcomings and weaknesses. He wants you to overcome and turn them into strengths. You can help Him.

God’s Word is like a spiritual mirror. Use it to examine yourself.

For example: Suppose that one of your faults is that you constantly break the speed limit. And suppose that you never thought of it as a fault.

God could correct you through a police officer giving you a warning or a speeding ticket. Or through a sermon or article that proves from the Bible that it is wrong to break man’s laws (as long as they do not conflict with God’s laws). Or God could correct you through news reports about the connection between breaking the speed limit and unsafe driving.

When you ask for correction, you are asking God to get your attention. If you take heed, you will benefit. But if you

do not listen, He may have to use more drastic measures—sore trial!

It could mean that, when you speed, you lose your driver’s license for six months. Or that you lose control of your car and crash. Or that, in the crash, you sever your spinal cord and end up in a wheelchair for life.

As you can see, it is far better to pray for correction than sore trial. Make sure to ask God to give you a teachable, open mind so that you can recognize when He is correcting you.

Ask God to help you examine yourself through Bible study. Notice: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

The Bible is God’s “two-edged sword.” It will teach, reprove, correct and instruct you in how He wants you to live (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Ask God to help you learn from the examples of others. Again, start with the Bible. It is filled with many examples, good and evil, for “our examples...written for our admonition” (I Cor. 10:1-11).

Also, ask Him to help you understand His will, and then do it.

“But Deliver Us From Evil”

Some translations render this, “...but deliver us from the evil one.” This refers to Satan the devil.

There are only two ways of life: God’s Way—the way of “give”—and Satan’s—the way of “get.” When you answer God’s calling, you must walk a narrow, difficult path that few enter—and even fewer complete (Matt. 7:13-14).

Your carnal mind—which is naturally hostile to God (Rom. 8:7)—will try to deceive you. This world and its glitter, riches, pulls and temptations will try to lure you back into the spiritual gutter. And the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4) will do everything in his power to turn you away from God and His truth.

The deck is stacked against you. On your own, you will fail. But with God’s help, you will succeed. Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

Notice: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can

be against us?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities [demons], nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31, 35-39).

Pray for deliverance from the pulls, temptations and evils of your flesh, this world and Satan’s “fiery darts” (Eph. 6:16). God will deliver you—always.

“For Yours is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, Forever”

As you finish your prayer, praise God again. Your thoughts should point to God’s soon-coming kingdom—His righteous government. Thank Him for the power and glory He will bring back to earth at the Return of Jesus Christ.

Saying “Amen”

This simply means, “so be it.” You should end all prayers with “amen.”

But before you do, make sure that all prayers are said in the name of Jesus Christ. Only by His authority—His name—can you approach God’s throne of grace: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19-20).

Christ is our High Priest. He intercedes for us (fallible, imperfect humans) whenever we pray to God the Father.

Where, When and How Often?

Paul wrote that we should “*pray without ceasing*” (I Thes. 5:17). Prayer must be continual (Luke 18:1).

Of course, this does not mean you should literally pray every second, minute and hour of your life, 24 hours a day. It simply means that you should be in a constant, prayerful attitude. You cannot

take days or weeks off. For Christians, prayer must be A WAY OF LIFE!

Study Bible examples. David said, “My voice shall You hear in the morning, O LORD” (Psa. 5:3). He also said, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice” (55:17).

The Prophet Daniel “kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime [“as was his custom since early days” (NKJ)]” (Dan. 6:10).

The carnal mind does not want to pray. It does not want contact with God or His ways.

But a converted, teachable mind looks forward to staying in contact with the Eternal.

In addition to private prayer, you should also pray throughout the day. Quietly pray in your car as you wait for the red light to change. Say a quick

prayer as you walk down a hallway at work.

But your longest, most detailed, fervent prayers should be done in a private place (a room or a closet), on your knees.

Now consider: When you pray, you are coming before the Creator God and His throne, the seat of the power of the universe! He desires to build His holy, righteous character in *you*, so that you can be born into HIS FAMILY.

In light of this, how much time do you think you can “spare” privately talking to God daily? Twenty minutes? Thirty? Forty? An hour? *You* be the judge. But experience has shown half an hour to be a minimum.

Prayer Positions

Your personal, private prayers should be given on your knees (see I Kings 8:54). After all, God is the ultimate King. Show

Him the respect He deserves. Praying on your knees also helps you have a submissive attitude.

If you need support, you can kneel with your arms resting on a bed or a chair.

You can also vary kneeling positions. One way is to kneel while spreading your hands up to the heavens (Ezra 9:5; I Tim. 2:8; Psa. 28:2; 63:4; 88:9; 134:2; 143:1, 6; I Kgs. 8:38-39, 54). Another is to bow your head to the ground (Ex. 34:4, 8; Luke 18:13; Gen. 24:26; Psa. 145:14-16).

In special circumstances (when facing severe trials), you may want to lie face-down on the floor (II Sam. 12:16; 13:30-31).

If you are unable to kneel or lie on the floor due to physical disabilities, God understands. He knows that we are “like grass” (Psa. 102:11; 103:11-15)—physical and temporary. God cares about our

An Expandable Prayer List

The following is an example of a prayer list that you can use to expand upon the prayer outline Christ gave in Matthew 6. Add to it. Personalize it. But use it only as a guide. Do not repeat it word-for-word, in vain repetition.

PRAY...

■ For The Restored Church of God headquarters staff. God is using a small staff to do a big job: To restore all the doctrines of God’s true Church—and to take the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world.

■ For God’s faithful ministry to grow and develop as new people continue to be called into God’s truth.

■ For the “Lord of the harvest” to add more ministers and leaders to His Church and the Work.

■ That God will add more Church members, prospective members, co-workers and donors.

■ That God will increase the Work’s income and budget. Also ask Him to bless His staff with the wisdom they need to utilize it.

■ For God’s servants to make wise decisions in finding better ways to do the Work.

■ That God will direct the planning, writing, editing and publishing of each of His booklets, articles and magazines.

■ About media. Pray about development of the RCG website; that more people will be led to it and our free literature. Pray that God will open other doors of media, such as radio, a newsstand program, advertising, etc.

■ About other RCG publications, such as festival brochures, the weekly Church announcements, etc.

■ About persecution. Pray that God will prevent Satan from stopping the gospel message.

■ About festival sites. Pray for a successful and smoothly run Feast of Tabernacles.

■ That more people will see where the fullness of God’s truth is being taught.

■ About every sermon, Church-led Bible study and sermonette. Pray that God will inspire both the speaking and the listening.

■ About socials, picnics and other Church functions.

■ That as congregations grow, God’s Church will be able to find halls, at the right size and for the right cost.

■ For the widows and the elderly of God’s Church.

■ For the headquarters staff to develop and grow so that they can help more people.

■ That God will develop His ministry, and that He will guide it with His zeal,

wisdom and understanding.

■ About your family. Pray for a happy marriage or help in child rearing.

■ That God will give you His understanding.

■ For protection—not just for yourself, but for others.

■ And also, ask God to guide you in making the right decisions in your life.

■ Pray about your health.

■ Ask God for self-control...wisdom...more of His Holy Spirit...peace of mind.

■ Ask God to help you develop Christ-like humility.

■ If it is difficult for you to participate in Church-related activities, ask God for His help. God does not give His people “the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7).

■ Pray about finding employment. Or ask God to help you grow and expand upon your job skills. Ask Him to employ others.

■ Pray that God will help you grow in His holy, righteous character and spiritual knowledge (II Pet. 3:18).

■ Ask God to help you control and conquer various wrong attitudes, thoughts, pulls, desires and temptations.

Note: Remember that every subject on this list that you can pray for yourself should also be used to pray for others.

attitude. He looks at the heart (I Sam. 16:7).

After All is Said and Done

Professing Christianity has taken the true doctrine of prayer and made it into a pious, self-righteous ritual. The shrieks and cries of sweaty, circus tent-sized

“prayer meetings” have turned prayer into a spectacle. And those who pray the “gimmies” treat God as though He was a genie in a bottle. They only call on Him when they want something, usually for selfish reasons.

This is not what God intended.

Prayer is a personal, private, one-on-

one conversation between you and your Creator.

You now know how to pray to Him, what to pray for, when, how often and where. With these tools, you are now equipped for an active, productive prayer life.

God is waiting to hear from you! □

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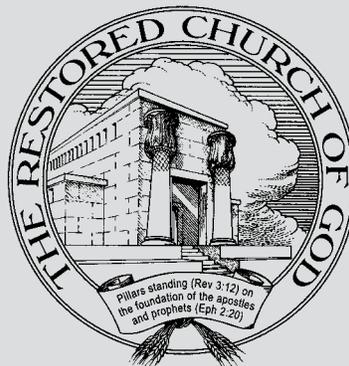
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