



## The Politicians' Primer on Prayer

TO: LEGISLATORS

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*One of my favorite quotes regarding prayer is this: "PRAYER IS THE SLENDER NERVE THAT MOVES THE MUSCLES OF OMNIPOTENCE." Oh how America needs more Legislators who can move the hand of God! With that in mind I would like to provide you with a myriad of passages from God's Word on prayer with the hopes of developing and maturing your art, discipline and overall maturity in becoming a man or woman of prayer.*

*I don't need to tell you that our nation is in a distressed state; we desperately need more leaders who are effective prayer warriors and that includes you, one of the 150 or so legislators who receive these weekly Bible studies in the Capitol. James 5:16b states "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." These following passages will provide you with strong insights to help sharpen the **effectiveness** of your personal prayer life. My hope is that you will develop in this area of your walk with Christ.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Since there are so many passages pertaining to prayer I will hold my comments to a minimum because your capturing all the passages in one sitting will have a much more profound effect than any lengthy insights I may have to offer. Herein I will use the word *entreator* as a synonym for a man or woman of serious prayer.

### II. EFFECTIVE ENTREATORS POSSESS A PROPER ATTITUDE AND OBEDIENCE

What are some of the biblically-revealed prerequisites for becoming an effective man or woman of prayer—a person whose prayers are answered—who is heard by God?

#### A. THEY DESIRE TO BE UPRIGHT BEFORE HOLY GOD

*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.* Proverbs 15:8

Upright *yashar* means "straight and right."

*The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.* Proverbs 15:29

One must be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ in order to possess an imputed **righteousness** from Him, enabling one to stand before and to be heard by Almighty God; God will not and does not hear the prayers of the **wicked**. This idea is enforced in the following passages:

*For the eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.* 1 Peter 3:12

In that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23) no one in and of themselves can approach the throne of God apart from the intercessory ministry of Jesus Christ on one's behalf (cf. Rom. 8:34).

*The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.* James 5:16b

The Greek word for **effective** and **accomplish** is the same in this passage. It is *energeo* and means "to work." Obviously we get our English word "energy" from this. Here is what James states results from the proper position and attitude of the believer relative to prayer: If one is in **right** standing before God (via acceptance of the propitiatory work of Christ) then to the degree one works at and has energy for prayer, is the degree that prayer will be answered in the ears, mind and will of God. One must put in the work of praying hard and often.

## MEMBERS WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF FIRST-VOTES-BACK (MONDAY OR TUESDAY NIGHT)

THE CAPITOL FAMILY ROOM

DINNER SERVED

SPOUSES WELCOME



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### B. THEY ATTEND TO THE POOR

As we have studied at other times, the responsibility of taking care of the poor first lies with the individual believer, versus the State or other less-efficient restorative agencies. Since God's means to provide for the poor first inure to individuals, it is any wonder that a believer's disobedience to caring for the poor would have a deleterious effect on their prayer life?

*He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor  
Will also cry himself and not be answered.*  
Proverbs 21:13

**ONE MAY RIGHTLY DECRY THE  
INAPPROPRIATENESS OF GOVERNMENT  
TAKING CARE OF THE POOR BUT DO WE  
PERSONALLY CARE FOR THE POOR?**

### C. THEY ARE SUBMISSIVE TO ALL OF SCRIPTURE

*He who turns away his ear from listening to  
the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.*  
Proverbs 28:9

To the degree one knows and keeps God's Word is directly proportional to effectiveness in prayer. One cannot expect God to answer prayers that are outside of His revealed will:

*This is the confidence which we have before  
Him, that, if we ask anything according to  
His will, He hears us.* 1 John 5:14

### D. THEY ARE SUBMISSIVE TO CHRIST'S LORDSHIP

The following passage is not about prayer per se, but it reveals the results that accrue to the obedient legislator relative to his or her submission to the lordship of Christ in all areas of life. God will open great **doors** of opportunity for those "whose hearts are totally His" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

*I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before  
you an open door which no one can shut,*

*because you have a little power, and have  
kept My word, and have not denied My  
name.* Revelation 3:8

What follows is a passage explicating the requirement of the lordship of Christ in the attitude, heart, mind and will of all believers who desires that their prayers be heard and answered:

*If you confess with your mouth Jesus as  
Lord, and believe in your heart that God  
raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;  
For with the heart a person believes,  
resulting in righteousness, and with the  
mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*  
Romans 10:9, 10

The idea of lordship implies an attitude of willingness to be totally submissive to the revealed will of God.

### E. THEY ARE THANKFUL TO GOD

The following passages illustrate this important ingredient necessary for powerful prayer: A positive attitude of thankfulness, joy and devotion.

*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in  
it with an attitude of thanksgiving;*  
Colossians 4:2

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by  
prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.*  
Philippians 4:6

*...Always offering prayer with joy in my  
every prayer for you all.* Philippians 1:4

*...Rejoicing in hope, persevering in  
tribulation, devoted to prayer* Romans 12:12

*"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and  
to the ministry of the word."* Acts 6:4

*They were continually devoting themselves  
to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to*



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*the breaking of bread and to prayer.* Acts 2:42

*Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayer, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.* Colossians 4:12

### F. THEY HONOR THEIR MATE (IF MARRIED)

*Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* 1 Corinthians 7:5

At times in a marriage, devotion to prayer exceeds regular conjugation.

### THIS PASSAGE SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE THE POWER OF PRAYING WITH YOUR SOULMATE

*You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.* 1 Peter 3:7

Christianity places a high value on women (cf. Gal. 3:28). The husband therefore is to **honor** his wife, not diminish her, if he is to be effective in prayer (contr: male-chauvinistic Islam, wherein males “pray” numerous times per day). One’s attitude toward their mate, the Bible says, directly relates to their power in prayer.

### III. EFFECTIVE ENTREATORS DISPOSSESS AN IMPROPER ATTITUDE AND DISOBEDIENCE

#### A. THEY KNOW THE UNREPENTANT GO UNHEARD BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY

Previously in this study the Greek word *energeo* was defined as the idea of “working” at prayer. But notice from the following passages that discipline and work apart from a proper attitude, and obedience to God is useless.

*So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.* Isaiah 1:15

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.* Matthew 23:14

*The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles.* Psalm 34:15

#### B. THEY KNOW IT'S NOT ABOUT PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Again, right-standing before God, both in position and practice is essential to having an effective prayer life. God knows one’s heart and He counts humility as precious over and above legalistic, ascetic self-righteous outward acts. Notice this in the following:

*To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.* Proverbs 21:3

*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, How much more when he brings it with evil intent!* Proverbs 21:27



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1 Samuel 16:7b is a fitting capstone to this sub-point: "...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

### IV. EFFECTIVE ENTREATORS FOLLOW BIBLICAL GUIDELINES

#### A. THEY PRAY FOR THEIR ENEMIES

*Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* Luke 6:28

This is a sign of self-control (cf. Gal. 5:22) over one's emotions of anger and vindictiveness. Obedience to this command of God not only evokes answers to prayer, is a sign of great personal maturity and conduct becoming of a Statesman, but is a protection over one's own heart to avoid forming roots of bitterness. Ephesians 4:31 commands the believer, "Let all bitterness...be put away from you along with all malice." "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" is the command of Jesus in Matthew 5:44.

#### I KNOW THIS IS HARD FOR YOU; IT IS FOR ME. WE JUST HAVE TO DO IT!

What rewards one reaps when they are obedient in this area—living above the standard of one's persecutors and asking God to work in their life—equates to prevailing over one's fleshly responses via prayer.

#### B. THEY PRAY IN PRIVATE, NOT FOR SHOW

Privacy is a precursor for powerful personal prayer. Praying in private refines motives and distills one's commitment, discipline, clarity and nobility in prayer.

*"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.* Matthew 6:5

*"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your*

*Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.* Matthew 6:6

*After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.* Matthew 14:23

*But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.* Luke 5:16

Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12 and 9:28 all speak of going to the mountains to pray. Danielle and I slip away every year on a month-long mountaineering trip in part for this reason. You are welcome to join us.

#### C. THEY PRAY WITH REVERENCE

In violation of the following biblical guidelines relative to prayer there are those who refer to Jesus as "The Man upstairs" or "Jesus is my favorite homeboy." Put away such addresses of irreverence, disrespect and immaturity; one is addressing their Maker, the one who holds their next breath in His very hands. He is *Lord God Almighty* my friend. Fear and reverence are becoming of all who are created.

*Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'* Matthew 6:9

*And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name.* Luke 11:2

There is no place for anyone, especially a state leader to display anything but piety, devoutness and sobriety for *Almighty God* in public and in prayer.

#### D. THEY PRAY WITH SPIRITUAL PROFUNDITY

Too often prayer meetings or personal prayer lists are all about physical well-being. The Apostle Paul models the profundity of prayer in many passages. The mature believer need pray not so much for felt needs but real, spiritual needs. Notice this emphasis in the following passages.



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*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* Ephesians 1:18

*To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.* 2 Thessalonians 1:11

*And I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.* Philemon 1:6

These Pauline prayers represent the many positional, theological themes in Scripture (which are quite evident when one adopts more than a devotional approach to studying God's Word). Paul is praying that these deep, profound truths be manifest in the lives of fellow believers, thereby modeling what subject matter is to be equated with the best time spent in prayer.

### THE SPIRITUAL MATURATION OF FELLOW ELECTED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SHOULD CONSUME MUCH PRAYER TIME

Not only is it important relative to the health of our country, it is a matter of obedience to 1 Timothy 2:1-4. These types of petitions should encompass the majority of one's time in prayer.

#### E. THEY PRAY EVANGELISTICALLY

Given the state of divide within Congress which stems from a spiritual divide between light and darkness; the saved and the unsaved, and the large amount of tares (see earlier study on tares) that are servants of Satan to confuse, much evangelistic prayer should be the order of the day by believing Members. Notice the following passages that underscore this biblical mandate:

*And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth,*

*to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.* Ephesians 6:19

*Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;* 2 Thessalonians 3:1

*Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.* Romans 10:1

*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayer, petitions and thanksgivings, be made...for kings and all who are in authority...who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Evangelistic prayer for State leaders is patently biblical. It is a matter of explicit obedience to the command of Scripture.

#### F. THEY PRAY FOR OTHERS' SPIRITUAL MATURATION

This point is a close cousin to "D" in that the prayers of mature believers need be focused on the spiritual maturation of others:

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.* Philippians 1:9

*For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.* Colossians 1:9

#### G. THEY PRAY CONTINUALLY AND HABITUALLY

One of the disciplines of life is prayer. When and where does one regularly pray? Personally I like to pray after a workout while drinking a protein shake as



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my physical body demands quiet rest. What is your time and place for regular prayer?

***With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.*** Ephesians 6:18

***Pray without ceasing.*** 1Thessalonians 5:17

### H. THEY PRAY FOR PHYSICAL HEALINGS

There is a continuing debate within Evangelicalism as to if or not God gives people the gift to heal others at will, wherein one can heal another with their *spiritual gift*. Apart from that, I do not know of any believers who think God cannot heal via God answering the *prayers* of other believers. Herein are the supportive passages of this truth:

***Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray.*** James 5:13

***Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*** James 5:14

***Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.*** James 5:16a

### I.. THEY PRAY FOR OTHERS' PROSPERITY

Believers are to “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Rom. 12:15); they are to “think of others as more important than yourself” (Phil. 2:3). It follows that believers should manifest these attitudes in their prayers:

***Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*** 3John 1:2

There is certainly a place for praying for one-anothers' physical well-being, but as previously noted, there is so

much more to prayer than praying for one-anothers' physical well-being!

## V. EFFECTIVE ENTREATORS REMEMBER AND CLAIM GOD'S PROMISES

### A. THEY KNOW GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS

***Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.***

Mark 11:24

There is a sense of confidence when one knows the whole counsel of God relative to prayer, when they know what they ask is according to His will. Such informed praying becomes much more efficient and less superfluous.

### B. THEY KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS ONE TO PRAY EFFECTIVELY

Lastly, there is a sense when one is not sure how to pray and yet God tells His followers to nonetheless pray, asking Him to help us in the very discipline itself of praying. This insight into prayer, given the feeble, fallen nature of man, is a fitting conclusion to the subject.

***In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.***

Romans 8:26

Our dependence upon God to teach and enable us to pray is a wonderful realization since “God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6)

## VI. CONCLUSION

Which of these elements of prayer do you need to work on? What is lacking in your prayer life that keeps you from becoming a pillar of prayer in our capitol community? Choose several of these points and work on them. Decide now to improve upon your discipline of prayer!