

PRAYER AND FASTING

The entire presentation that follows is based upon an outline study on prayer that was taken from **Landmarks Of Baptist Doctrine, Volume III, the Doctrine Of Salvation, Lecture 10, Prayer and Fasting, pages 523-534, Pastor Robert J. Sargent: available from Bible Baptist Publications; Oak Harbor, Washington.**

One may ask, “Why include *Prayer* in with the great doctrines of salvation?” Prayer is every bit part and parcel of the privilege of being saved. When we are born again, the lines of communication — severed because of our sinfulness — are established. Just as breathing is vital to physical life, so prayer is the vital ‘breath’ of our spiritual life.

I. WHAT IS PRAYER?

In its basic sense the word ‘*prayer*’ simply means “asking? To pray is to ask. In its broader sense, prayer means the act of communication with God, and this involves many aspects of which “asking” is but one.

Prayer involves many forms. Just as we may become physically ill through an unbalanced diet, so we cannot expect spiritual health except through a balanced prayer life.

The following acrostic will help in understanding the parts of prayer:

A — doration
C — onfession
T — hanksgiving
S — upplication

A. Adoration.

This is the act of verbally worshiping God. The word ‘worship’ means to “ascribe worth” — *Revelation 5:9,12*.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. *Revelation 5:9,12*

This aspect of prayer — simply adoring the Lord for Who and what He is — is a lost ‘art’ amongst many Christians, usually because it involves time, meditation upon the Word of God, and the aspirations of the soul and spirit (not mere words!)

See: Psalm 33:1; 103:1; 146:2,3; 150:2; Matthew 11:25,26; 6:13; 2 Corinthians 9:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

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Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright. *Psalm 33:1*

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. *Psalm 103:1*

2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. 3 Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help. *Psalm 146:2-3*

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. *Psalm 150:2*

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. *Matthew 11:25-26*

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. *Matthew 6:13*

15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift. *2 Corinthians 9:15*

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; *Ephesians 5:19*

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. *Colossians 3:16*

B. Confession.

As weeds and debris block the pipes and channels, so sin blocks the channels of communication in the heart. See: *Isaiah 59:1,2; Psalm 66:18*

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear. *Isaiah 59:1-2*

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*: *Psalm 66:18*

Before we come to the Lord, there ought to be some earnest examination of our hearts and lives, followed by confession and forsaking of sin.

See: *Psalm 51:10; I John 1:9*

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. *Psalm 51:10*

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9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:9*

C. Thanksgiving.

Christians need to cultivate the habit of being thankful in all things

See: *Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; 1 Timothy 4:4,5.*

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. *Philippians 4:6*

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. *1 Thessalonians 5:18*

4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:
5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. *1 Timothy 4:4-5*

D. Supplication.

Supplication is another word meaning prayer. It also means “asking.” This is the easiest part in praying for most believers. Supplication falls into 2 categories:

1. Petition.

This means asking for oneself. Some areas are:

a. **In Need Of Wisdom — *James 1:5***

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. *James 1:5*

b. **In Destitute Circumstances — *Psalms 102:17***

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. *Psalms 102:17*

c. **In Times Of Suffering — *James 5:13***

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. *James 5:13*

d. **In Expression Of Needs — *Philippians 4:13; Matthew 6:11***

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. *Philippians 4:13*

11 Give us this day our daily bread. *Matthew 6:11*

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e. In Situations Of Injustice — *Exodus 22:22,23*.

22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. 23 If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; *Exodus 22:22-23*

2. Intercession.

This means asking for others. For example:

a. Fellow Christians — *James 5:16*

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. *James 5:16*

b. Pastors — *Hebrews 13:7*

7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. *Hebrews 13:7*

c. The Sick — *James 5:14-16*

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. *James 5:14-16*

d. Rulers — *I Timothy 2:1-3 (For their salvation)*

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; *I Timothy 2:1-3*

e. Enemies — *Luke 6:28*

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. *Luke 6:28*

f. The Lost — *I Timothy 2:1,4*

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the

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truth. *1 Timothy 2:1,4*

g. Sons And Daughters — *1 Chronicles 29:19*

19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision. *1 Chronicles 29:19*

h. The Jews — *Romans 10:1; Psalm 122:6a*

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. *Romans 10:1*

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. *Psalm 122:6*

D. L. Moody said, "*Prayer is the lifting up of the desires unto God for all things agreeable to His will In Christ's Name; with the thankful acknowledgment of His mercies, and the humble confessions of our sins.*"

Philip Brooks defined prayer this way: "*A prayer, in its simplest definition, is merely a wish turned heavenward*"

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

The importance of prayer for the Christian is seen in:

A. The Prominence Given To It In Scripture.

Many Bible characters are noted for their prayers. For example:

1. Abraham — *Genesis 18:23-33*

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein? 25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? 26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. 27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes: 28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy *it*. 29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake. 30 And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there. 31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And

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he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake. 32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake. 33 And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place. *Genesis 18:23-33*

2. Hannah — *1 Samuel 1:27*

27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: *1 Samuel 1:27*

3. David — *Psalms 55:17*

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. *Psalms 55:17*

4. Solomon — *1 Kings 3:5-10*

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. 7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in. 8 And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. *1 Kings 3:5-10*

5. Daniel — *Daniel 6:10*

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. *Daniel 6:10*

6. Peter — *Acts 10:9*

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: *Acts 10:9*

B. The Example Of The Lord Jesus Christ.

See: *Mark 1:35; 9:28,29; 14:38*

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35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. *Mark 1:35*

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. *Mark 9:28-29*

38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak. *Mark 14:38*

C. The Emphasis Given It In The Early Churches.

See: *Acts 2:42; 4:24,31; 12:5,12; 13:3*

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. *Acts 2:42*

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. *Acts 4:24,31*

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. *Acts 12:5,12*

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away. *Acts 13:3*

D. The Fact That It Is Commanded.

See: *Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.*

And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; *Luke 18:1*

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; *Colossians 4:2*

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

E. The Sin Of Prayerlessness.

See: *1 Samuel 12:23; Isaiah 43:21,22*

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you:

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but I will teach you the good and the right way: *1 Samuel 12:23*

21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. 22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. *Isaiah 43:21-22*

F. The Value Of It In Victorious Christian Warfare.

See: *Ephesians 6:12-18*

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; *Ephesians 6:12-18*

III. HOW MEN OUGHT TO PRAY

The Word of God gives much instruction as to how Christians should pray. There are 4 major areas to consider:

A. The Right Attitude.

The Bible places little or no relevance upon the position of the body of the one praying. We may stand — *Mark 11:25*, kneel — *1 Kings 8:54*, lie prostrate — *Matthew 26:39, etc.*

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. *Mark 11:25*

54 And it was *so*, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. *1 Kings 8:54*

39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*. *Matthew 26:39*

What is necessary is the right attitude of the soul.

In *Matthew 6:9-12*, the Lord Jesus Christ gives us a ‘model prayer (not the Lord’s Prayer!) This teaches much concerning attitude.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10

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Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. *Matthew 6:9-12*

1. **Confidence** — “*Our Father which art in heaven*”
2. **Reverence** — “*Hallowed be Thy Name*”
See: *Psalm 145:18-19*

18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. *Psalm 145:18-19*

3. **Expectancy** — “*Thy kingdom come*”
4. **Submission** — “*Thy will be done*”
5. **Dependence** — “*Give us this day our daily bread*”
6. **Forgiveness** — “*Forgive us our debts*”
See: *Psalm 34:15*

15 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry. *Psalm 34:15*

7. **Love** — “*as we forgive our debtors*”
8. **Humility** — “*lead us not into temptation*” See also: *II Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 10:17; James 4:16*

14 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. *2 Chronicles 7:14*

17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: *Psalm 10:17*

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. *James 4:16*

9. **Faith** — “*deliver us from evil*”
10. **Unselfishness** — note how the Lord uses the pronouns ‘us’ and ‘ours’ — not “I.”

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B. The Right Manner.

1. We Pray To God Our Heavenly Father.

Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:11-13; John 16:23

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Matthew 6:9

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? *Luke 11:11-13*

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. *John 16:23*

2. We Pray In Jesus' Name.

John 14:13,14. This means we are to ask on the basis of the merits of Jesus Christ, drawing on His account.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*. *John 14:13-14*

3. We Pray In The Power Of The Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20; Romans 8:26,27.

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; *Ephesians 6:18*

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, *Jude 20*

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*. *Romans 8:26-27*

Prayer is to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

4. We Pray Believing.

Hebrews 11:6; James 1:5-7; I John 5:13-15.

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6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. *Hebrews 11:6*

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. *James 1:5-7*

5. We Pray Persistently.

Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 7:7.

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; *Ephesians 6:18*

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: *Matthew 7:7*

6. We Pray Earnestly.

Romans 15:30; James 5:16b.

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me; *Romans 15:30*

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. *James 5:16*

7. Other Prayer Attitudes.

a. **With Delight In The Lord — *Psalm 37:4,5***

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass. *Psalm 37:4-5*

b. **In Sincerity — *Psalm 145:18-19***

18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. *Psalm 145:18-19*

c. **With Thankfulness — *Philippians 4:6,7***

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your

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requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6-7*

d. With Wholeheartedness — *Jeremiah 29:13*

13 And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. *Jeremiah 29:13*

e. With Persistence — *Luke 18:1*

And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; *Luke 18:1*

f. In Obedience — *I John 3:22*

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. *I John 3:22*

C. The Right Place.

There is no place where we cannot pray. Jonah prayed from the belly of a whale; Paul and Silas in a prison cell; etc. We can pray in public — *Acts 27:35*; in the meetings of a church — *Ephesians 5:19,20*; and in private — *Matthew 6:6*.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. *Acts 27:35*

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; *Ephesians 5:19-20*

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. *Matthew 6:6*

“The secret of success in prayer is success in secret prayer.”

The following are some essentials for secret prayer:

1. A Definite Time — ***“when”***
2. A Definite Act — ***“enter”***
3. A Definite Place — ***“thy closet”***

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4. A Definite Separation — “*when thou hast shut the door*”

5. A Definite Object — “*pray to thy Father*”

D. The Right Time.

God’s prayer channels are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year and every year.

We are exhorted to pray without ceasing — *1 Thessalonians 5:17*. Yet it is extremely important for every Christian to develop the discipline of set times of prayer — *Psalms 55:16,17; Daniel 6:10*.

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

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. *Psalms 55:16-17*

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. *Daniel 6:10*

IV. HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER

A. Unconfessed Sin.

Deuteronomy 1:43-45; Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 1:15; 59:1,2

43 So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill. 44 And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, *even* unto Hormah. 45 And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. *Deuteronomy 1:43-45*

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*: *Psalms 66:18*

Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear. *Isaiah 59:1-2*

B. Hardness Of Heart.

Mark 11:25,26.

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is

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in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. *Mark 11:25-26*

C. Selfish Motives.
James 4:2-3

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts. *James 4:2-3*

D. Failing To Honor One's Wife.
1 Peter 3:6,7.

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. 7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. *1 Peter 3:6-7*

E. Self-satisfaction Or Lack Of Appreciation.

F. Idols In The Heart.
(Anything put before God.)

G. Indifference To The Things Of God.
Proverbs 1:24-30

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. *Proverbs 1:24-30*

H. Neglect Of Those In Need.
Proverbs 21:13

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. *Proverbs 21:13*

I. Despising God's Word.
Proverbs 28:9; Zechariah 7:13

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9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination. *Proverbs 28:9*

13 Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: *Zechariah 7:13*

J. Vain Repetitions.
Matthew 6:7

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. *Matthew 6:7*

K. Spiritual Instability.
James 1:6,7

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. *James 1:6-7*

V. THE RESULTS OF PRAYER

A. God Is Glorified.
John 14:13

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *John 14:13*

B. Answers Are Given.
1 John 5:14,15; John 14:13,14.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. *1 John 5:14-15*

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*. *John 14:13-14*

C. Great Things Are Wrought.
James 5:16b.

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. *James 5:16*

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D. Completed Joy.

John 16:24.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.
John 16:24

VI. PRECIOUS PRAYER PROVERBS

1. Prayer avails when everything else fails.
2. “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” (Tennyson)
3. The secret of success in prayer is success in secret prayer.
4. We can do more than pray after we have prayed, but we cannot do more than pray until we have prayed.
5. Prayer makes the common man uncommon, and is able to move the highest heaven and shake the deepest hell.
6. Pray as if everything depended on God, and work as if everything depended on you.
7. We should not say, “Listen, Lord, Thy servant speaketh,” but, “Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth”.
8. Do not divide your life into compartments of such exclusiveness that there is no intercommunication.
9. The saddest day in a preacher’s life is when he lets his hand slip out of God’s hand.
10. Prayer will either drive sin out of our lives, or sin will drive prayer out of our lives.
11. We cannot be any more effective in our testimony with men than we are in our closets with God.
12. Prayer must not be an occasional act, but a fundamental attitude of life.
13. Do not allow prayer to be relegated to the scrap heaps of piecemeal performances.
14. When in our Churches we have money, we have what money can do; when we have education, we have what education can do; when we have culture, we have what culture can do; when we have organization, we have what organization can do; when

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we have society, we have what society can do; when we have size, we have what size can do; — but when we have prayer, we have what God can do.

15. Prayer gets lost in the rivalry of competing interests.
16. Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of God's highest willingness.
17. Prayer is that contemplation of God which ends in resignation to His will.
18. Prayer is not an hysterical spasm, but a spiritual calm.
19. Neglect of prayer is the Delilah who clips the wings of many a ministerial Samson.
20. When God can reach down and do anything He wishes with me, then I can reach up and do anything I wish with God.
21. We are never so high as when we are on our knees.
22. We praise prayer more than we practice It.
23. Faith never blooms so beautifully as In hard, rocky places.
24. When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.
25. Remember the tea kettle; It never sings until it gets into hot water.
26. Most men of power have found that it was best to look into the face of God in the morning before looking into the face of their fellow man — thus putting God between them and their problems and assuring themselves of victory.
27. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets.
28. The real man — God's man — is made in the closet.
29. Talking to man for God is great but talking to God for man Is greater.
30. We cannot be much for God unless we are much with God. The Christians who are the mightiest in their closets with God are the mightiest in their witness to man.

VI. FASTING

The subject of prayer and fasting is one of the least understood and least practiced aspects

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of the Christian walk. Many think of fasting as medieval, monastic, or masochistic. Fasting has indeed been abused by many religious groups — *Luke 18:12a* — but cannot be rejected as a valid practice on these grounds.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. *Luke 18:12*

A. What Is Biblical Fasting?

1. In General Terms.

The term “fasting” simply means ‘abstinence’.

Usually this means going without food, and it may be done for medical reasons (prior to surgery,) health reasons (to lose weight,) or spiritual reasons.

2. In Specific Terms.

There are 98 references to fasting in the Word of God.

a. **Fasting usually involves abstinence from food — *Esther 4:15,16.***

15 Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. *Esther 4:15-16*

b. **Fasting can include abstinence from other things such as bathing and sleep — *II Samuel 12:15-20.***

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. 16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house arose, *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself*, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. *2 Samuel 12:15-20*

c. **Fasting may only involve abstinence from certain foods — *Daniel 10:3.***

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3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. *Daniel 10:3*

- d. **Fasting can involve abstinence from other normal physical needs**
— *I Corinthians 7:5*.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. *I Corinthians 7:5*

Fasting is an act of subduing the flesh in order to accentuate the spirit.

See: *I Corinthians 9:27*.

27 But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. *I Corinthians 9:27*

Biblical fasting is a deliberate act of physical denial for the purpose of concentrating of spiritual things.

B. Why Should Biblical Fasting Be Practiced?

1. **Because We Are Detached From Christ's Physical Presence.**
Luke 5:35.

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. *Luke 5:35*

2. **Because We Are Expected To Fast.**
Matthew 6:17. This verse says, “...*when ye fast...* “—not, “if!”

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; *Matthew 6:17*

3. **Because We Have A Wonderful Promise From God.**
Matthew 6:18.

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. *Matthew 6:18*

4. **Because We Are In Good Company.**

- a. **Moses — *Exodus 34:28***

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28 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. *Exodus 34:28*

b. Hannah — *I Samuel 1:7.*

7 And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. *I Samuel 1:7*

c. David — *II Samuel 12:16.*

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. *2 Samuel 12:16*

d. Elijah — *I Kings 19:8.*

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. *I Kings 19:8*

e. Daniel — *Daniel 10:3*

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. *Daniel 10:3*

f. Esther — *Esther 4:16.*

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. *Esther 4:16*

g. Ezra — *Ezra 8:21*

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. *Ezra 8:21*

h. Nehemiah — *Nehemiah 1:4.*

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, *Nehemiah 1:4*

i. Anna — *Luke 2:36,37.*

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36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; 37 And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. *Luke 2:36-37*

j. John The Baptist — *Luke 5:33.*

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples* of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? *Luke 5:33*

k. The Lord Jesus Christ — *Matthew 4:1,2.*

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. *Matthew 4:1-2*

l. Paul — *II Corinthians 11:27.*

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. *2 Corinthians 11:27*

C. When Should Biblical Fasting Be Practiced?

Obviously, fasting is special — it is not a daily thing we do. The Bible does not say, “fast without ceasing.”

There are special times when fasting is important and sometimes necessary:

1. When We Face Severe Temptation Or Testing.

Matthew 4:2; II Samuel 12:16; I Kings 19:8.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. *Matthew 4:2*

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. *2 Samuel 12:16*

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. *1 Kings 19:8*

2. When We Earnestly Seek Wisdom In A Matter.

Ezra 8:21-23; Daniel 9:2,8 Fasting heightens spiritual perception, and as such is an aid to understanding the Word of God.

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our

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God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God *is* upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath *is* against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us. *Ezra 8:21-23*

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 8 O Lord, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. *Daniel 9:2,8*

3. When We Are Engaged In A Spiritual Battle.

Matthew 17:19-21; Mark 9:25-29; Ephesians 6:12.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. *Matthew 17:19-21*

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. *Ephesians 6:12*

4. When We Are Faced With Seemingly Impossible Situations.

Nehemiah 1:2-4.

2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province *are* in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. 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, *Nehemiah 1:2-4*

5. When We Are Undertaking New Ministries Or Direction.

Acts 13:2,3; 14:23.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away. *Acts 13:2-3*

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. *Acts 14:23*

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6. When We Are Faced With Great Danger.

Esther 4:16.

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. *Esther 4:16*

7. When We Are Chastened Of God.

In the Old Testament sin was often a cause for fasting. The wicked city of Nineveh was spared God's judgment in response to fasting — *Jonah 3:5-10*. Judgment upon king Ahab was deferred after he fasted — *I Kings 21:27-29*.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands. 9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not. *Jonah 3:5-10*

27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: *but* in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house. *I Kings 21:27-29*

8. When We Seek Power Over The Flesh.

Pride and a too-full stomach are old bed-fellows. Satan most often uses the avenue of *appetite* in his approach to man — for example, *Genesis 3:6; 9:20,21; 25:28,34; 27:4; Exodus 16:3; Luke 12:19; Luke 4:3; and I Corinthians 10:6,7.*

6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. *Genesis 3:6*

20 And Noah began *to be* an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. *Genesis 9:20-21*

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28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright. *Genesis 25:28,34*

4 And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. *Genesis 27:4*

3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. *Exodus 16:3*

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. *Luke 12:19*

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. *Luke 4:3*

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. *1 Corinthians 10:6-7*

D. How Should Biblical Fasting Be Practiced?

Fasting is initiated by God, and the time, the length, and the kind of fast are all of His choosing.

1. Fasting Is To Be Done Unto The Lord.

Zechariah 7:4-6. Fasting will be unacceptable and ineffective without a right relationship with the Lord — *Isaiah 58:3-5; Joel 2:12, 13.*

4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me? 6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves*? *Zechariah 7:4-6*

3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? *Isaiah 58:3-5*

12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and

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with weeping, and with mourning: 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. *Joel 2:12-13*

2. **Fasting Is To Be A Personal Individual Matter.**

It is not a religious ritual — *Luke 18:9-12*; it is not for outward show — *Matthew 6:16-18*

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. *Luke 18:9-12*

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. *Matthew 6:16-18*

3. **Fasting Is To Be Accompanied By Prayer.**

Most Scriptures dealing with fasting combine it with prayer.