

**“BALANCING OUT  
YOUR  
PRAYER LIFE  
HANDBOOK”**

**W. Max Alderman**

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For additional copies of this book or  
other titles by Dr. Max Alderman, write:

(In United States)

**Missionary Evangelist W. Max Alderman**  
**406 Myrtle Crossing Lane**  
Statesboro, GA 30458  
912-601-2137  
Philipministry@gmail.com

(In Canada)

**Bethel Baptist Church,**  
4212 Campbell St. N.,  
London, Ont. N6P 1A6  
1-866-295-4143 (Toll Free) • 519-652-2619  
(voice) info@bethelbaptist.ca (e-mail)

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## **Table of Contents**

“BALANCING OUT YOUR PRAYER LIFE” .....	4
THE DIRECTION OF OUR PRAYERS .....	9
The Pointing of our Prayers (Prayer’s Object) ..	49
The Purpose of Our Prayer (Prayer’s Objective)...	
.....	54
To serve His purpose .....	74
To obtain His provisions.....	75
To Have His protection.....	77
THE DUTY OF OUR PRAYING .....	79
Alms Giving Helps us to Have A Proper Appreciation As We Pray .....	85
Fasting Will Help Us Have a Proper Attitude as We Pray .....	100
The Prayer Closet Will Help Us Have the Proper Atmosphere When We Pray.....	107
PARALLEL PICTURES OF ALMS GIVING, FASTING	

AND CLOSET PRAYER ..... 121

Applying Scriptural Principles As You Balance Out  
Your Prayer Life ..... 130

## **“BALANCING OUT YOUR PRAYER LIFE”**

### **Psalm 5; Matthew 6:1-18**

The Bible is the “Book of Balance” to help keep us from living in the land of extremes. This is the reason, in the Scriptures that you will see the use of literary twins (when I use the word twins, I am referring to the words that are grouped together to illustrate Truth in some aspect), such as “strength and beauty” or “grace and truth”, along with “law and grace”. With the use of these twins, you may notice that each word has a contrasting value to the word that it is placed next to. The word *strength* is a word that describes a more rugged quality than its contrasting word, *beauty*. The word *beauty* has a more refined quality.

For balancing out our personal lives there needs to be both a *quality of strength*, but also a *quality of beauty*.

Dr. Jack Hyles wrote a book entitled: "Blue Denim and Lace" that illustrated the qualities of having both strength and beauty. He said that a young man ought to be able to both balance a tea cup on his knee; *that's beauty*, and bait a fish hook; *that's strength*. Just as you would not want your son to grow up having only the quality of beauty or only the quality of strength, the same is so in our practical Theology.

In our Theology, there is always the danger of living in *the land of extremes*. The Word of God is a balanced Book and a proper study and interpretation of the Bible will help us to stay balanced and focused. Just a few days ago, someone asked if I embraced a certain Theological position. I told him that I did not, because to do so meant that I would be embracing an extreme position that causes unnecessary distraction and conflict. Just as our theology needs proper balance to avoid

extremism, which could then result in heresy, so should our praying. One of the best ways to avoid heresy is to *balance out Truth* within its proper contextual setting. There is always the danger and concern that we should have of taking a Scripture out of its context “lest it become a pretext”. Once a proper contextual understanding of the Text has been achieved, then you have the liberty to compare Scripture with Scripture and then also achieve a proper balancing out of Truth. This hermeneutical effort is what helps to accomplish and also sustain this quality. This will be the approach of this study on “Balancing out your prayer life”. Every effort will be made to show that prayer has several active forces at work when prayer is properly being exercised. With this balance, there will be a prayer work that involves the body, the soul, and the spirit of man. Until this is so, the total man is not involved in his praying. Should a person desire

to pray and is not presenting his body as a “living sacrifice” then there will be something greatly lacking (Romans 12:1); also there will be the mental aspect of not conforming to this world as you are being transformed by “the renewing of your mind”. Proper prayer balance will involve the total man and we will look at this truth more closely as this study develops.

This study on prayer will involve mostly a study in the Old Testament, Psalm 5 and a study in the New Testament, Matthew 6:1-18. These two portions of Scripture have been chosen to illustrate the importance of “balancing out your prayer life”. There are many more Scriptures that could be applied to this study, but it is my belief that these passages will serve my intent quite well.

May we observe that Psalm 5 shows *The direction of our prayers* and Matthew 6:1-18 shows *The duty of our*

*praying.* Prayer lacks *definition and purpose* if it does not have *direction and precision.* By that, I mean that our prayers must be aimed deliberately towards a definite target, just as the skilled archer would aim his arrows towards the “bull’s eye”. We will also discover that the word *direct* as used in Psalm 5 is a word that the priest would use in describing how he would cut up the meat sacrifices under the Levirate system. He would very carefully place the knife on the proper place that he was to cut... To know how we should pray our prayers involves having our directions come from God, even as God gave the priest his directions for offering the sacrifices in His prescribed manner. It is the Word of God which shows us how to direct our prayers according to *His prescribed manner.* Then, by the instructions that we receive from the Word of God, we are responsible to pray our prayers according to the Word of God...

What George Mueller said about prayer shows additional great insight as to how prayer should be balanced out with the Word of God: "I saw the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditate on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed, and that, by means of the Word of God while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into communion with the Lord, I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament early in the morning." Mueller, the great prayer warrior, certainly realized the great value of balancing out his prayer life by preparing his heart with and according to the Word of God. So, may we be challenged to do the same?

To help us accomplish this, Psalm 5: teaches us that our prayers must have proper direction... May we carefully consider this truth before we further

consider the *duty of praying*?

## **THE DIRECTION OF OUR PRAYERS** **(Vv.1-12)**

Addressing this thought with a simple question, “In which direction should our prayers be aimed?” This *wonderful* Psalm will teach us the answer to this question when David shows us the prescribed manner in which he prayed. David began his prayer with this petition, “Give ear to my words O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the words of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.” One cannot help but notice the careful manner in which David *approached* the Lord. He did this with *great respect* and also with *great reverence*. For too often, we rush into the presence of God without giving Him the *eulogy that He is so worthy*. Eulogy speaks of rendered praise. Prayer certainly ought to begin with praise. Praise Him for who He is and for what He does. He is the Creator God. He is

the Wonderful Counselor. He is the comforting Advocate, who is so graciously touched by the feelings of our infirmities. He is the one that hears us and then can really “do something about it”. “You have not because you ask not”, the Word clearly instructs us. We must Approach him on the basis that we all are unworthy penitents who are only counted worthy by His marvelous grace. Respect Him as being the only One who provides us access into the atmosphere of His very holiness.

One should not even think of rushing into the office of the president without properly preparing his approach. Even those who approach the president on a regular basis will do so exercising a proper protocol. They do this to show their respect to the office of the president. Likewise, we should show proper respect to the King of kings as we approach Him and then

remembering that we certainly do it on the basis of receiving the sure mercies of Christ. In Jeremiah, the Lord is speaking as he asks this question: “Do you fear me?” which literally means do you reverence me as being the Creator God. Though we live in the economy of grace, we still should have a reverential fear of Him knowing that He is Almighty God as Jeremiah reminds us.

(Jeremiah 5:22) “Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand [for] the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?”

When David approached the Lord, during the writing of this fifth Psalm, it could have very well taken place after he had committed the terrible sin with Bathsheba which included the murder

of her husband Uriah. This could have been the reason that he asked the Lord to *consider his meditation*. Even though David was forgiven of his wicked sin, he could not help but remember what he had done and then to remember how gracious God was to forgive him of his terrible sin. His approach seemed to be accompanied with the kind of respect that would have marked a truly forgiven sinner. He did not approach God with a presumptuous spirit. We, as we approach Him, should do so on the basis that we have also been truly forgiven and are able to come worthily only because He has counted us as being worthy...

Not only did David have a proper *approach* in his praying, he had a proper *appreciation* when he prayed. The last verse in this Psalm teaches us this: "For thou, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield."(V.12).

David knew God to be the source of his continual blessings, whether it was the blessed presence of God when he confronted Goliath, as he Cried out “the battle is the LORD’S”. (I Samuel 17:37) “And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle [is] the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands” or when he said in Psalm 27, that the Lord was his *Light and his Salvation*. The same was so in Psalm 23 when he recognized the Lord as being his eternal Shepherd.

Our praying will have greater connection if we have greater appreciation for what God has already done for us and then have appreciation for what He is currently doing. He is a very present help in times of need... Ingratitude is a Spiritual plague that touches so many that make the claim of being Christian. A person is not Spirit filled if he lacks a spirit of thanksgiving

according to Ephesians 5:18-24. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

David demonstrated proper direction in his praying when he said in verse number two “and unto thee will I pray”. Just as David prayed to the Lord, so should we. We do not pray to Buddha; we pray to the true and to the living God. One very important reason for emphasizing direction when we pray is that there is a strong trend in the world to just meditate. Meditation certainly has its place, but it does not necessarily mean that you are praying when you are meditating. There is a form of

meditation that is called *transcendental meditation* that was introduced by Maharishi Mahesh Yoga and requires listening to a sound called the *mantra*. These sounds become focal points for one's concentration while practicing the ritual of transcendental meditation. It was discovered years later that these sounds were actually the names of sixteen Hindu gods worshiped in India, even though it was originally said that these sounds had no real significance. For the Christian, this should be reason for great concern because it is another way that is being used by Satan to keep us from worshiping the true and the living God. When one meditates as a believing Christian, he should do so in respect to worshiping God, alone. His mind should be fixed upon the Lord. Therefore, the direction that we pray is certainly important and to whom we pray are certainly important. We should never pray to just any god but to only the true and living God. Notice some of

the different names of God that shows the different ways that we might approach Him as we pray.

\_ Elohim denoting that God is the creator and caretaker of the universe: Genesis 1:1

When we offer up our prayers, we should do it knowing that we are speaking to the God of not only the universe, but God of all creation. He is the God who spoke into existence everything that is and everything that will be. He deliberately sectioned off his creative work into seven parts, which were 24 hour days that ended on the seventh or the Sabbath day with Him resting from His completed labors. He demonstrated this pattern of work that was followed by a day of rest. Yet the main thing for us to consider when we consider this name of His is that not only did He create everything; He owns it as well. He owns it in His majestic

splendor.

The demonstrated power of creation is the same power that is available for Him to powerfully answer our prayers. In His Omnipotence, He is quite capable to hear and also has the power to answer our prayers. He is Elohim, which signifies the plural form of God at work; this name denotes the work of the trinity. There is the ongoing effort on the part of Satan to discount the powerful work of God as the creator God. In the secular humanistic universities there are constant attacks being made on God and upon who He really is. This effort to discount God is Satanic in origin. Generally speaking, those who take a stand in support of the Genesis account of creation are looked upon with ridicule and scorn. For this reason there is a Greek mindset that characterizes most of our people population. A *Greek mindset* questions the idea that there is a real God as

described in the Bible.

Even when Paul was ministering during his lifetime, he would approach people as their either having a Greek mindset or a *Hebrew mindset*. Those who had a Hebrew mindset believed in God as being the creator God. Thus, when he ministered to them, he did not have to explain God or to argue creation, he immediately was able to preach Christ to them. But if they had a Greek mindset, he had to first use what we now refer to as *apologetics* in his preaching. He had to establish the premise that God is. The same is true today, but once you become a convert to a faith that God is, then you are able to recognize that God is able to answer your prayers because He is Elohim.

*\_ Jehovah denotes that God is the "LORD" the self-existing and the sovereign eternal one, the essence and sustainer of life for the believer. The God who changes not: Genesis 2:4*

This means that He is the immutable God who can be depended on and does not need anyone else but He Himself. He is both *self-existing and self-sustaining*. He needs no one else to guarantee the exercising or the support of His sovereign purpose. He also does not need an army to support and ensure His power. He is the majestic One who has absolute power as the preeminent One. He does not share this power with anyone. He does not change and He may be depended on as we pray to Him. Our life is begotten and sustained by Him. As we pray, we should approach Him as the Sovereign Lord who is completely capable of sustaining us.

While living in this sinful, wicked world we need to know that God is not like many who make a commitment but do not honor their commitments; He absolutely can be depended on as being completely reliable. We recognize the

way that the Lord works according to each dispensation and it appears that He is changing as He does, but that is not so. He is not changing in the essence of who He is. He is instead changing in respect to how He deals with men and man's sin. With this being the way that the Lord works, it should be comforting knowing that the Lord does not change because of any weakness or concern that He has; He is immutable and He only operates according to His predetermined purpose. He knows what He will do (John 6:6). This is very important for us to know as we pray, because it helps us to pray believing that He absolutely can be depended upon because of His unchanging nature.

*\_ Adonai denotes that God is Lord Master and the One who has purchased us. The One to whom we are personally to submit completely our all: Genesis 15:1-2*

When we acknowledge Him as Adonai, we are accepting Him as the Master to whom we owe servitude. Our prayers and our approach may be done in a bold manner, but should also be done in the spirit of us being a bond servant or slave as we approach Him. This kind of boldness is not haughtiness. It is instead a respectful appreciation for Him having freed us from the slave market of sin. He is the one who purchased us in the slave market of sin and then redeemed us to be free, never having to go back into bondage again. He is now become our worthy Master. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. As being so, He purchased us with His precious shed blood. We should pray understanding this to be true. We should strive to be worthy servant because of the workings of His marvelous grace. Our prayer should be, "Lord, teach us to serve you according to your Word as truly obedient servants..."

– El Shaddai *denoting God is God Almighty the all present, all-powerful, all knowing one: Genesis 17:1-2*

This name tells or describes an attribute of God as He relates to us with having no weaknesses. He has the strength of presence; He has the strength of Power and He also has the strength of perfect knowledge. What better qualification is that as it pertains to Him when answering our prayers? This means that He knows who we are, where we are, what our needs are, and then can do something about it. He truly will never leave nor forsake us. In Theological language this speaks of His:

1. Omnipotence;
2. Omnipresence;
3. Omniscience.

These attributes are certainly a blessing as we find ourselves praying while knowing that there is no

weakness in respect to God's ability to know, be available and also to have the power to answer our prayers. God's omnipotence may be recognized as we read the Scriptures. There was never a challenge that He could not meet and also conquer. Notice the following examples that support this statement of Truth: He powerfully parted the waters at the Red Sea when the Egyptians pursued the Israelites; the Israelites walked across on dry ground and the enemy were fearfully destroyed. God powerfully commanded the sun to stand still, brought down the walls of Jericho, poured out a destructive flood and powerfully came forth from the grave in resurrection splendor. These are just some of the ways that His power is demonstrated in the Scriptures. Having this knowledge helps us to pray knowing that He is able...

His omnipresence is a very sterling attribute in our just knowing

that He is always with us, never leaving us. This means that He is only a prayer away. Millions could pray at the same time and He would hear them all. His prayer line is never busy. Unless there is sin in your life that will hinder answered prayer, you need not worry about getting a “busy signal”. This, coupled with God’s omniscience lets us know that He knows what we are going to pray even before we do. Our praying is not to let Him know...It is to make sure that *we know* and also recognize Him as being our prayer provider when we pray.

– Jehovah-El-Elyown *denoting the LORD is the Most High*: Genesis 14:18, 22

When Abram offered tithes to Melchizedek, He was acknowledging that God was the owner or possessor of the universe. He also attributed to God his victory over the kings of the vale. He

knew that God was the one who gave him victory over a most formidable enemy. As we pray, we can have this confidence that God will answer our prayers and that as the owner and possessor of all that there is, He is certainly the *Most High God*. He is not to be compared equally with anyone other than He Himself as defined within the Trinity. As Trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are both three in one and enjoy a state of being Coequal God. In this state they all are the Most High God.

This is but offering a crude comparison, but in the military, the president occupies the office of the commander in chief and as such in a military sense, the president is the *most high one*. All rank, even as it applies to the generals, will find their rank below that of the office of the president. When the president steps off of the plane, all the generals are there to salute him and

offer him the respect that belongs to his office alone. The Scriptures tell us in Philippians 2: 9, 10 “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and thing under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” When we pray, our prayers ought to be offered with greater respect than that which the President of the United States gets when he steps off of the plane. One day our Commander-in-Chief will step on the clouds as He makes His return for His own... Wow! What a saluting opportunity that will be!

\_ Jehovah-Jireh *denoting the LORD is our provider:* Genesis 22:1-14; Philippians 4:19

Abraham was ready to sacrifice his

son Isaac and was stopped just before he did, and was told that the Lord had provided a ram as a substitute. This was a provision from the Lord that showed that God was able to provide exactly what was needed for Abraham and also that which was required of God as the sacrifice was being offered... The ram was a very worthy and a very special sacrifice that met both Abraham's and God's requirements and also portrayed the great sacrifice that was made at Calvary by the Lord Jesus Christ. God not only provides for our salvation needs, but provides also for all of our particular needs. We need to understand that prayer involves both *asking and receiving*. In the same way that God offered the lamb as a substitute, the Lord provides for us as we pray. Some of the statements that describe a certain aspect of God's name are overlapping. The Hebrews would name their own children in such a way as to describe something that pertains

particularly to the child that was being named. Even with that being so, the child would also have traits that were different and also particular to the child's on personality. With God, having many names, it gives strong emphasis to Him being the All in All. There is nothing lacking and as the God that He is, He is able to totally meet and provide for our needs. All of His names are like the many facets on a diamond; they all shine with brilliancy and a glory of their own, but are still a part of the one singular diamond. The Lord's names are also facets that show forth His wonderful glory.

\_ Jehovah-Shabbawth *denoting He is the LORD of the Sabbath: Exodus 20:10*

The Lord rested after His creation work. He did not rest because He was tired; He rested to give us a pattern for our work and rest. Just as we can live in the land of extremes, we also can be

guilty of doing the same as it involves our resting and our work. Some work all the time without resting their bodies and others rest all the time without working their bodies. After God gave us a pattern to follow, He then instructed that this rest be practiced by man when He gave us the Ten Commandments. He is the Lord of the Sabbath, and in reality He is the Lord and the giver of rest. We are living in a world that is filled with tension. Isn't it comforting in just knowing that we can find the rest that we need in the Lord Jesus Christ? When we pray, we are able to ask God for the comfort and the rest that we need even when living in this very turbulent world during these perilous times. In Him, we may find rest for our bodies and for our souls.

The prayer closet could be as much for us as it is for Him, as we go into the prayer closet and then shut the door behind us. In doing so, we are shutting

out a very noisy world and then setting the atmosphere to be alone with Him. We may find this to be a time for dedicated rest. The kind of strength and rest that we get there is not to be compared to any other rest or sleep.

\_ Jehovah-Rophe *denoting the LORD is our healer (physically and spiritually):* Exodus 15:22-26; Matthew 4:23-24

It is also wonderful just in knowing that we have a God who is able to bring us the healing that we need. I have personally been able to find healing through answered prayer. For over ten years, I wore hearing aids in both ears as a result of losing my high frequency hearing while serving as an “anti-sniper” in the military. While I was training, I very foolishly would not use the ear protectors. With continuous shooting of the rifle I lost my ability to hear. It was when I was being considered to serve as a Chaplin that I

found that I had a 60 percent lost of hearing in both of my ears. While in Trinidad on a mission's trip, I found that I could not locate size 10 hearing aid batteries. I was there with great frustration finding it difficult to communicate with the people that I was trying to minister to. The preacher that I was with brought it to my attention how the nationals were speaking to me and I was not hearing a word that they were saying. I then asked him would it be selfish for me to ask God to give me my hearing back. He said "No it would not." I then asked him to pray. The next day I was sitting in a dentist office in Trinidad when God gave me my hearing back! I have never put my hearing aids back into my ears. I, now, do not even know where they are...

Just as God is able to heal us physically, He is also able to bring us Spiritual healing. We can achieve this through prayer once we have met the

requirements of the Word of God as it pertains to why we have the Spiritual hurt. If our Spiritual hurt or problem is due to sin, then that sin must be dealt with and once it has been, God will bring the healing that is needed. He certainly is able.

\_ Jehovah-Nissi *denoting the LORD is our banner, our protection, our victory in battle:* Exodus 17:8-16; 1 Corinthians 15:57

We have already alluded to how God is able to bring us the victory that we must have. Yet, this title or name of God shows that He is our absolute victory when we are going through Spiritual warfare. We will have very serious and difficult times while we are battling the enemy. As I go into meetings as a missionary-evangelist, I often discover that the pastor and the churches are going through their battles. I must remind them that the Lord is able to

take care of what they are going through... and He is. I encourage them to continue praying and to let the Lord have His way through the preaching of the Word. I say this to them after having pastured for 36 years and having found God always faithful. As long as we rally around Him as our Banner, we can expect to find much victory. When you are praying, pray with the confidence that He is indeed our Banner and the one who gives us the protection and the victory when we are facing our individual battles.

– Jehovah-M'kaddesh *denotes that the LORD is our sanctifier onto himself and holiness:*

Leviticus 20:7-8; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Philippians 2:12-13

One major part of our praying involves praying for forgiveness. It is when we understand that the Lord is our sanctifier that we realize that He

can forgive us of all our sins and transgressions. He does this through the powerful efficiency of His blood. God wants us to be holy unto Him. We, upon recognizing that there is sin in our lives should confess that sin and then through prayer we are then sanctified unto God. No matter what we are guilty of, God is able to sanctify and to cleanse us. We may approach God as we pray knowing that He is able and He is willing to forgive us of all of our sins and transgressions.

1 Peter 1:13-16 <sup>13</sup> Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: <sup>15</sup> But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; <sup>16</sup> Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

\_ Jehovah-Shalom *denoting that the LORD is our peace:* Judges 6:1-24; Philippians 2:2; 4:4-9

When God's Word is working in harmony or in balance with prayer, there can be such great wonderful peace. The peace of having God's presence and also the joy of being able to speak to Him in prayer as He speaks to us by His Word is so comforting. There is no premium that can be placed upon that value of having what John 14 calls *the peace that passeth all understanding*. Having peace in the midst of our storms comes from having a relationship with the Lord that involves a belief in God's Word and then having the right to approach Him which comes from praying.

When the Lord was in the boat with the disciples while going to the other side to minister to the demoniac of Gadara, there arose a great storm and while Jesus was sleeping, they thought

that they were going to perish. They awoke the Lord and even asked Him, if He cared whether they perished or not. He then rebuked the sea, by saying: "Peace, be still". Immediately the sea became calm and the Lord told them that their great fear was due to having no faith. The Lord had already told them that they would be going to the other side. Often, we find ourselves in a storm and need to remind ourselves that just as the Lord calmed the mighty waves, He can do the same for us during our storms. When the tempest blows, remind yourselves that through prayer you can have his peace even in the midst of the storm.

\_ Jehovah-Tasba *denoting that the Lord is the LORD of hosts*: 1 Samuel 1:3; Isaiah 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; 54:5

He is the Lord of the armies... He is the ruling power that controls and governs all the angels and also the

heavenly hosts. The Lord of Hosts is His name. When we have a grasp and clear understanding of this truth as we pray, we then know that God could summon the hosts of heaven if He so desired to fight for us. Do not underestimate the power of God as you pray. Do not underestimate His available resources when you pray. This kind of praying is appropriate when we pray for strength while fighting against the enemies of the faith. We need to know that He is able to fight for us during our spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is not to be fought by carnal means. Ephesians chapter six gives us much instruction as it pertains to Christian soldiers and to their warfare. We are to put on the whole armour of God as indicated in Ephesians 6:13 and then in verse number 16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

*Albert Barnes' New Testament Commentary*

explains these fiery darts in this manner:

“Paul here refers, probably, to the temptations of the great adversary, which are like fiery darts; or those furious suggestions of evil, and excitements to sin, which he may throw into the mind like fiery darts. They are blasphemous thoughts, unbelief, sudden temptation to do wrong, or thoughts that wound and torment the soul. In regard to them, we may observe:

(1) that they come suddenly, like arrows sped from a bow;

(2) they come from unexpected quarters, like arrows shot suddenly from an enemy in ambush;

(3) they pierce, and penetrate, and torment the soul, as arrows would that are on fire;

(4) they set the soul on fire, and enkindle the worst passions, as fiery darts do to a ship or camp against which they are sent.” (Barnes)

This shows us that as we pray that we have One who can help us as we exercise the prayer of faith. We pray knowing that the enemy can advance

upon us from any direction and we must for that reason pray exercising faith. Prayer is a faith work and that *is the reason* that the “shield of faith” should cover us and protect us from the enemy that lies before us.

\_ Jehovah-Tsidkenu *denotes that the LORD is our righteousness: Jeremiah 23:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:21*

This should contribute to the humbling aspect of our praying. We must acknowledge that He is the God of righteousness. His righteousness is available for us at our conversion. As we pray we should do so while understanding that the quality that makes us acceptable before the Father is our having His righteousness. Our approach before Him is granted upon the basis of having the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His imputed righteousness. It is important as we pray to have a concept of what His

righteousness is. The fact of God's righteousness should create in us a feeling of awe and a sense of Spiritual poverty, for we all come short of His righteousness. But when applied to us in Christ, by having His righteousness, it is a source of unspeakable comfort and joy. Paul uses the word "righteousness" to describe the gracious gift of God to men, whereby all who believe on the Lord Jesus are brought into a right and also a legal relationship with God. Man cannot, in and of himself achieve or obtain this degree of righteousness. This righteousness is unattainable by obedience to any law, or by any merit of man's own, or any other condition than that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The man who trusts in Christ, upon conversion, becomes "the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He becomes in Christ and because of Christ, all that God requires a man to be, all that he could never be in himself, he now is...

To further understand the concept of righteousness, we need to know how righteousness is defined: “Righteousness (*dikaiousune*) is the character or quality of being right or just; it was formerly spelled ‘rightwiseness,’ which clearly expresses the meaning. It is an attribute of God (Romans 3:5). The context shows that His righteousness means essentially the same as His faithfulness, or truthfulness, that which is consistent with His own nature and promises.

In the sayings of the Lord Jesus, righteousness is, among other things, whatever is right and just in itself, whatever conforms to the revealed will of God (Matthew 5:6,10,20; John 16:8,10). It is the sum total of God’s requirements (Matthew 6:33).” (Mizzi)

This would certainly be the way the lost sinner prays, he prays realizing that he has no righteousness of his own and must gain the righteousness that comes

only from the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not have to approach the Lord knowing all the Theology that is associated with the righteousness of God, but should know that he is dreadfully lacking the righteousness that God requires of him, because he is a sinner. Then as believers, we pray knowing that we to are also totally dependent upon His righteousness for our prayers to be answered.

– Jehovah-Rohi *denotes that the LORD is our Shepherd the One who cares for and protects us:*

To me this is one of the most comforting names as it applies to the LORD being our Shepherd. A good shepherd *leads* His sheep; a good shepherd *protects* His sheep and He *provides* for His sheep, as well. As you pray, think of the pastoral work of the Good Shepherd and then word your

prayers according to Him being that Good Shepherd. When you are struggling along the paths of life, remember, He is there. When you are trembling while afraid of the enemies that might surround you, He is there. When you are feeling discouraged, His rod and His staff will comfort you. How wonderful to know as we pray that we are talking to the Shepherd and that as the Good Shepherd, He is listening.

Also, when we think of this name of the Lord, we cannot help but think of the beloved twenty-third Psalm that shows the Lord not only as our Shepherd, but we also recognize the many other compound names of the Lord in this brief Pastoral. Notice with me how this is so:

1 The LORD is my shepherd [He is Jehovah-Rohi--our shepherd]; I shall not want. [What name does that remind you of? Jehovah-Jireh--our provider!]

2 He maketh me to lie down in green

pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters  
[Jehovah-Shalom-our peace!].

3 He restoreth my soul [Jehovah-Rophe--  
our Healer!]: he leadeth me in the paths of  
righteousness for his name's sake [Jehovah-  
Tsidkenu--our righteousness!].

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of  
the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou  
art with me [Jehovah-Shammah--He is There!];  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the  
presence of mine enemies [Jehovah-Nissi--our  
Standard of Victory]: thou anointest my head  
with oil [Jehovah-M'Kaddesh--our Holiness; our  
sanctification]; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow  
me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the  
house of the LORD for ever.

Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:11; 14-18;  
27-30\_ Jehovah-Shammah *denotes that  
the LORD is there, present: Ezekiel*  
48:35; Matthew 18:19-20; Philippians  
4:5; Hebrews 13:5

When my mother died and my Dad began staying alone, I asked him if he wanted anyone to stay with him. I was his pastor then and he asked me, "Didn't you tell me that the Lord would never leave me or forsake me?" I certainly had to answer, "Yes sir". Then he said. "That settles it, I will be alright." That name at that time in my Dad's life was probably the most meaningful as it declared that the Lord is always there... When we pray, you may rest assured that He is always there. We should let these names be our "mantra" or focal point as we pray, thinking intently on who He really is. I love who He is; I love knowing that He is who He is and that we can know Him by His name and access Him with the calm assurance that His name is Hallowed or different from just anybodies name. With His names greatly describing Him, we should have no excuse for learning who He is and approaching Him knowing that His name says it all!

Again, this shows how we balance out our prayer lives with the wonderful promises of God's Word.

While studying these names, we have only touched "the hem of the garment, but a more thorough study of these names will give valuable insight of who God really is both in essence and in worth as we approach Him in prayer. Isaiah recognized the value and the worth of God in Isaiah 6 when he saw the Lord "high and lifted up". The Lord should have great significance in our lives as we recognize Him as being the preeminent One. Now, may we look at the way David prayed as recorded in Psalm five:

**Very THE POINTING OF OUR  
PRAYERS (Prayer's Object)**

When David prayed, he said, "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple". When he said, "in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple", David was indicating a *reverence that belongs only to the Lord*. He also knew that when he prayed that he was praying to God who is a very merciful God. His plentiful mercies are described by using the word *multitude*. Aren't we glad that there are all the mercies that we need available to us when we pray? Yet, as we pray, like David prayed, should do it with a holy reverence and awe that belongs only to Him. When David said, "...I will worship toward thy holy temple", he was doing it with the mental awareness that God is real and also praying in a Kingdom sense; God has a real place, and then in an eternal sense

by His Spirit, He is everywhere at the same time. It is comforting in knowing that God is with us even as the Comforter lives in us. It is also great in knowing that as we pray that He is seated at His heavenly throne where we can come to His throne boldly. The throne room requires that we have a *faith mindset* and then pray that way with direction. Our mind must be fixed upon Him, as He is the One to whom we pray and then as it involves direction, we should have our minds fixed upon whom or what we are praying for.

#### **Pictured by an archer**

To further indicate the proper direction of our praying, the word *direct* is defined in the same way that you would describe an archer *who deliberately takes aim at his target*. He does so with great precision and with great deliberation. When the archer shoots his arrow, it is not with a “shot

gun blast” mentality. He more than points; he aims. That is the way that we should pray. We should carefully *aim our prayers*.

For example, instead of just praying for our church or other things, in a general way, we should pray for it in *a particular way*. We should pray for real needs as it involves calling those needs by name. You may say, “God knows who or what I am thinking about”; true, but unless you specifically focus on a specific need then you may not know who you are *really* thinking about. I am so guilty of *shooting my prayers* like one would shoot a shotgun by just pointing and not aiming and because that is so, I often miss the target altogether. We certainly must be more defining as we pray. As an example, when we are praying prayers of thanksgiving, then we should specifically name the person of whom we are thinking. If we specify that for which we are thankful, it

causes us to more consciously involve ourselves in our praying. We must pray with even more than specificity as we are involved in intercessory prayer. Notice the comment that George Buttrick made as it applied to intercessory prayer:

*“Intercession is more than just specific, it is pondered: it requires us to bear on our heart the burden of those for whom we pray.” George Buttrick*

May we learn from the archer the way we should aim our prayers, and as Buttrick said, May we do it with *pondered specificity...*

### **Pictured by a priest**

Another word picture that gives us indication as to how we should pray would be by considering the work of the priest. The priest most certainly could have gotten a job in any butcher shop; *but* a priest would not cut up the sacrifices as a butcher would *whack up*

his meat in his butcher shop. The priest would cut the meat sacrifices with absolute precision and would do so under the specific requirements that were given to him by God. The priest would very carefully make his cuts. We should also very carefully make our *prayer cuts* known unto the Lord.

## **The Purpose of Our Prayers (Prayer's Objective)**

There is a real purpose in our praying. Prayer is a means of communicating with God and a means also of obtaining those things that we must have, both for our physical and for our Spiritual survival. Prayer is a means whereby the saint is able to intercede on another's behalf. This kind of praying is unselfish. Prayer is like breathing Spiritually. We cannot survive very long in our Christian walk without prayer. *Prayer is not an option; it is a necessity.* When we pray we are showing by faith our real dependence upon God. We pray to God with Him being the sole objective of our praying. Even as we pray prayers for ourselves, we should pray seeking His will and His divine purpose for our lives. We know this to be true by what He taught us in the example or model prayer as taught in Matthew 6:9-13.

<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.

The Lord, who is the Creator God, who also made us, and who also sustains us, has by that same creative power every right to instruct us on how we should approach Him in prayer. God the Son refers us, as we pray, back to God the Father, who is also the First Person in the Godhead. The old puritan writer, Thomas Manton, gives us insight to the designed and eternal relationship that God the Father has to God the Son:

“With relation to Christ, as the Son of God, so the first Person is called the Father, as he is the fountain of the Deity, communicating to and with him the divine essence: Ps. ii 7, ‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.’ The personal property of the Father is to beget; and of the Son, to be begotten. There is an eternal now, wherein God is said to beget him. Thus he may be called the Father of Christ, as he is the second Person, and not only as incarnate and mediator. Though God be Christ's Father, as second Person, yet they are all equal in power,

dignity, and glory; but as Mediator, God is his Father in another respect. So it is said, John xiv. 28, 'My Father is greater than I -not as God, for so he was equal; he thought it not robbery to be equal with God:' Phil. ii. 6. But 'greater than I; That is, consider him as man and mediator, in the state of his humiliation; for it is notable to consider upon what occasion Christ speaks these words 'If ye love me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I;' that is, You admire me and prize my company exceedingly, because you see the power which I put forth in the miracles which I do; ye would rejoice if you understood it aright; he is infinitely more glorious than I appear in this state of abasement and humiliation. Thus, with respect to Christ, God, the first Person, may be called the Father." (Thomas Manton; puritan writer 1620-1667).

When Jesus began His prayer

example with “Our Father”, He was also showing forth a tender paternal relationship that we can enjoy as being the children of God. What a thrill it is to relate to Him in this manner which also insures that I can relate to my extended family here upon earth in the same manner. By this, I mean if we have the same heavenly Father that makes us family. What a great thrill to travel across the globe and meet people who are members of the same family. We understand this to be true because of what we are told in John’s Epistle; 1 John 3:1, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” By us being referred to as *sons of God that* speaks of relationship and with that relationship we are family.

Jesus directed His prayer to heaven, while demonstrating a proper approach,

when He said, "Hallowed be thy name." Many times, we lack the proper reverence that we should have and that should also attend our prayers. We often lack the faith that prayer involves and demands. Reverence to the Lord is based upon our believing Him to really be LORD. When we know that He is LORD, means that we appreciate His majesty, His ownership, His power and His government. Without faith, there can be no proper approach. The entire concept of prayer demands the exercising and the practicing of faith. In *Godly reverence* we acknowledge His name to be above all other names and we approach Him in prayer, thusly. We must also approach Him this way because of the honor that is due His name. Philippians reminds us that He has a name that is above every other name (Phil. 2:10). Notice the words of Philippians 2:9-11: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth., and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father.”

If we lack a proper respect for His name, we can by no means properly approach Him. To sincerely pray in the manner of hallowing His name is to also have the attitude of hallowing God Himself. In Judaism and according to the practice of the devout Hebrew names are extremely important. Names were not just a means of tagging someone, but it further expressed in essence really who that person is; thus the importance of attaching such piety to the name of the Father. When Jesus worded His prayer as He did, those who were hearing Him knew how critically important that it was to hallow the name of the Father. Matthew Henry carefully explains the attitude that we

should have as we approach Him in respect to who He is according to His worthy name: "*Hallowed be thy name*. It is the same word that in other places is translated *sanctified*. But here the old word *hallowed* is retained, only because people were used to it in the Lord's Prayer. In these words, we give glory to God; it may be taken not as a petition, but as adoration; as that, *the Lord is magnified* or *glorified*, for God's holiness is the greatness and glory of all his perfections. We must begin our prayers with praising God, and it is very fit he should be first served, and that we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from him. Let him have praise of his perfections, and then let us have the benefit of them." (Matthew Henry)

This brings us to the next part of the prayer when we consider the area and the scope of God's rulership.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come, Thy will be

done in earth, as it is in heaven.

“Thy kingdom come...” Sometimes, we think of the will of God as being only local or even as a kind of government that concerns only the world that we live in presently, but that is not so. God’s will is *universal* and it is also *eternal*. When Christ gave us this pattern prayer, He did it by mentioning the will of God with respect to the entire kingdom of God, and also in respect to His will *being performed on earth, as it is in heaven*. We should pray thinking not only of ourselves in an immediate more restricted context, but should think of God as He rules in the more vast eternal context of His kingdom and how our praying should be done in that respect. Our ministry has impact including our local church, but not *excluding* opportunity outside of the local church, both *in time and in geography*.

Someone said that we impact people for three or four generations; The Old

Testament also alludes to this, but I do not think that we can comprehend the total range and the domain of operating in the realm of God's purpose as we pray and have our very being. There are those, who walked many generations ago for only a few days and are still impacting our lives. I think of the very short time that David Brainerd spent on the earth as he ministered to the Indians. I think of the way that he agonized with God for the souls of men and how he always felt so worthless before God. Listen intently to these words from his diaries as he yet speaks to our hearts. He penned these words on May the 13th. (At Wethersfield) "Saw so much of the wickedness of my heart that I longed to get away from myself I never before thought that there was so much spiritual pride in my soul. I felt almost pressed to death with my own vileness. Oh! What a "body of death" is there in me! Lord, deliver my soul! I could not find any convenient

place for retirement, and was greatly exercised. Rode to Hartford in the afternoon; had some refreshment and comfort in religious exercises with Christian friends; but longed for more retirement. Oh! The closest walk with God is the sweetest heaven that can be enjoyed on earth!"

David Brainerd's diaries are still being read today and people are still being challenged by them, even as I am. When David was penning his diaries, I am most sure that he had no agenda or plan that even considered that his words would be read and reread for centuries. It all is attributed to his praying: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Even his diaries were *written prayers* that were written with kingdom significance.

While giving emphasis to the kingdom portion of the prayer, we must remember that there is both a messianic and an eschatological aspect

to this prayer. The future part as it pertains to the Messiah would involve the setting up of His earthly kingdom which had very great significance to the Jew and the Nation of Israel. There is both a practical and a Spiritual aspect of this prayer when we pray. When the word "Kingdom" is used in the Scriptures, it is referring to God's sovereignty rather than a geographical territory. Kingdom used in this manner refers to a sphere rather than a land government. In the Scriptures, you will learn that kingdom is used in two different ways. There is the Kingdom of Heaven and also the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven is from heaven and under the heavens upon the earth, and the Kingdom of God is in heaven over the earth, existing eternally and also extends to the whole universe. The Kingdom of Heaven has the Messiah for its king. The Kingdom of God has God for its ruler. Some aspects of the Kingdoms are overlapping and even

difficult to completely describe them, but as Jesus prayed, He was looking both ahead to begin His ruler ship, but was also aware of the current kingdom work that was ongoing that was to be prayed for.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

Everyday should be an opportunity to approach the Lord as Him being the One who truly provides us with our just needs being met. The prayer for our physical needs and our Spiritual needs are expressed here. Jesus set the prayer example of how we are dependent upon God. It was just as the nation of Israel, while in the wilderness when they were feeding off the manna and the quail, looked to God daily for their needs; so should we. When we pray, we should also acknowledge our total dependence upon God. I am now working as a missionary-evangelist after having pastored for 36 years. When I made my move, by resigning my church, I only

had one meeting and that was more than a year away. Yet, God answered prayer and so graciously provided all my needs according to His wonderful riches in glory. He provides the daily manna that I need. God allows us to pray this way, so that we may be more keenly aware of our personal requirements and needs. When we pray, we are acknowledging our total dependence upon the Lord God Almighty. Prayer is not only asking for things; it is also acknowledging our need for things...

Just as we acknowledge the need for physical bread, we must also realize that we have need for Spiritual bread. The word of the Lord is certainly our daily bread while giving us life, nourishment, and sustenance. Listen to how Martin Luther describes this daily bread, as he explains this petition of the Lord's Prayer:

“In short, when we have God's

power, which begins here through the Word, it then becomes an actuality when we are buried and rise again.” This happens each day, Luther explains. And Luther says, when we pray “give us this day our daily bread,” we must “turn our eyes to everything that can prevent our bread from coming and the crops from prospering.” He says “therefore, extend your thoughts to all fields and do not see only the baker’s oven.” Luther was showing some of the things that could hinder the nourishment that comes from the Word of God, here likened to the *Daily Bread*.

It is wonderful in knowing just how nourishing the Word of God is and also how strengthening it is to our Spiritual well-being. We will not be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might if we fail to take in the Spiritual nourishment that comes from our daily Bread. All the great students of the Word who were also devoted to the things of God would

not even think of awakening without feeding upon the Word of God. In our busy, demanding world, we need to certainly begin our day with dedicated time and communion with the Lord. We do this by spending time in His Word. We should pray that the Word will be digested into our very being and then become a real part of who we are. I remember years ago an author was selling her book on the premise that “you are what you eat”. How true this is spiritually. You are spiritually what you eat. To have the mind of Christ, one must partake of those things that create a Christ like mind. We need both to be physically and spiritually strong.

Notice, as the Lord continues to teach us to pray.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

When the Lord gave us this prayer pattern, it was no accident that He said, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive

our debtors”, being prayed immediately after He said: “Give us this day our daily bread.” As we eat each morsel of our daily food and partake of the spiritual nourishment that comes from God’s Word, we should do so with a clear conscience knowing that if we have iniquities or sin debts that need to be taken care of, then we should be mindful of that. We then should diligently seek God’s forgiveness upon our confession of those sins. We should also have the same kindred mercies in forgiving those who have hurt us. We should be able to partake of the blessings that God showers down upon us with a clear conscience, void of any offense towards others. We should notice that the sub-theme of Matthew could certainly be that of *forgiveness*. Perhaps no other theme appears more often in Matthew’s gospel than that of forgiveness. Matthew uses the word *aphiemi* forty-nine times, nearly one third of the total number of its

occurrences in the New Testament. We need to rest on this thought as we meditate, “How can we expect to be forgiven by others if we are unwilling to first forgive others?” The word in Matthew, *aphiemi*, most frequently is translated “to leave,” or “to let go.” It may be commonly recognized that a major hindrance to forgiveness is the inability to “let go”, to let go instead of holding on to something with the expression, “I will never forget or forgive you for what you did.” In reality, you are saying, “I will never *let go*.” If you are unable to let go and forgive someone, then you can expect your prayers to be greatly hindered or even not answered at all. It is certainly no mistake that the Lord incorporated the major theme of forgiveness into His example prayer. This is so, because this is also a major theme as it relates to our own personal redemption.

Notice this next and also last part of

the prayer how interesting and how intriguing it is when each part is examined for the purpose of our edification and help.

<sup>13</sup>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 6:9-12)

The clause, "And lead us not into temptation" must be balanced out with the clause, "deliver us from evil". It is not that God is going to tempt us to do evil, for He tempted no man in this manner, but to illustrate the contrasting state of being tested by evil, we are to pray that God will instead deliver us from evil. I have often said that I am so very glad that God is not omnipotent as an evil or wicked despot while using His omnipotence in such a powerful evil way against us. How awful that would be if He did so, even though apart from His grace, we would absolutely deserve it. But praise unto

God, He is not that way towards us. He uses, instead, His power in a very protective and also in a very benevolent way to continually protect us. We have the opportunity to pray for God to deliver us from evil and to protect us from doing evil. This is only achieved by having a prayerful obedience to the precious Word of God. John Calvin expressed the meaning of this part of the Lord's Prayer as it applies to human weakness and our need to be dependent upon the Lord for our deliverance, when he said:

“We are conscious of our own weakness, and desire to enjoy the protection of God, that we may remain impregnable against all the assaults of Satan. We showed from the former petition, that no man can be reckoned a Christian, who does not acknowledge himself to be a sinner; and in the same manner, we conclude from this petition, that we have no strength for living a

holy life, except so far as we obtain it from God. Whoever implores the assistance of God to overcome temptations, acknowledges that, unless God *deliver* him, he will be constantly falling.” Wow! What spiritual insight that he expressed in those few words... “Unless God deliver him, he will be constantly falling.”

In this study, I have been emphasizing how the Lord delivers us from the temptations that are taking place in respect to our adversity, but it would be also true that we must be delivered from the temptations that are associated with having prosperity as well. The delivering involves being led by God in paths of righteousness, but we must be willing to diligently walk the path that He puts before us. Prosperity does not insure protection from temptation; there may even be more danger when we are enjoying a state of prosperity. David found his greatest

temptation when he began to take his ease. This led to what may have been his greatest sin when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah murdered. This sad time in David's life should serve as a warning to us even today.

### **To serve His purpose**

In the realm of Christian service, we should serve with purpose. Nothing is more frustrating to the cause of Christ than that of lacking real purpose in what we do. There are two very necessary parts in maintaining purpose. First, the *Word of God should instruct us* as it defines our purpose and *prayer will then empower us to do God's will within His purpose*. Even though we may have an understanding of what the will of the Lord is, unless we pray, we will lack the power to serve God with purpose. The Lord, when He prayed, said: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is

in heaven.” When we pray, wanting to do the will of God, we should do so by not being guilty of *praying amiss*. Prayer may be the *tuning fork* that keeps us in tune as we pray and then helps us do what the Word of God insists upon while praying without ceasing.

### **To obtain His provisions**

The Lord showed us by His prayer example how we are to pray for our daily provisions. Prayer is asking and we must remember that we have not because we ask not... The Lord daily loadeth us with His benefits. It should be very comforting just in knowing that the Lord has all that we need and that He will supply all of our needs according to His great riches in glory. This is what is meant when he prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Just as the manna came from heaven on a daily basis, so will our provisions come to us. It is even as the song says. “My

Jesus knows just what I need”.

It was in the same manner that Elijah was fed at Brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:2-6).

“And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.”

With this exercise Elijah was being taught total dependence upon the Lord. He trusted the Lord to sustain him even when the drought that he had predicted was having its effect all around him. This illustration from the Old Testament

can show us the way that the Lord cares for us during the times of our personal adversity. It was because Elijah obeyed the Word of the Lord that God sustained him. The principle is the same with us, as well.

### **To have His protection**

How many times have we gone into the throne room for no other purpose than that of asking God for protection? We pray this way because we realize just how vulnerable and how weak we really are in this old wicked world. We carry this concern as we live out our lives during these perilous days (2 Timothy 3). The Lord once again gave us a great prayer example as He prayed, <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

As already stated, Psalm 5 shows us the “direction of our prayers” and

now in Matthew chapter 6, we will look at the “duty of our praying”. Praying is a wonderful privilege, but it is also our privileged duty.

**THE DUTY OF OUR PRAYING**  
**(Matthew 6:1-18)**

This sixth chapter, (Vv. 1-18) has been used as a study on closet prayer by many devout students of the word. The puritans examined this portion of Scripture and probably have written volumes on it as it pertains to prayer. Yet, before one makes only a “prayer application”, he must not rush to a conclusion as it applies to what Christ is saying about closet prayer until he first makes a proper interpretation of the entire Text (at least as it is given in chapter six in the first 18 verses). This must be done to *insure prayer balance...* Chapter six uses three examples of how we should worship and serve God. Chapter six begins with a warning: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them...” Then in verse number five, we must note the warning is given again as it pertains to praying: “And when thou prayest, thou

shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” In verse number 16, the same warning is repeated again, “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.”

Before sub-dividing this chapter and looking at just a part of it, we must first learn what Jesus is teaching here in its entirety. It should be very apparent that He is warning first against the terrible sin of hypocrisy. This is not only a *blatant sin* that we need to be concerned about, but it is also a *very subtle sin* that can gradually encroach upon us and destroy worship and service as it will also hinder our prayers from being answered. What makes it such a wicked

sin is that it is a “sin of pride”. The phrase, “before men, to be seen of them...” shows the prideful part of this warning. The Lord hates pride, and He especially hates it in pretended worship. He began His warnings as it applies to the giving of alms. Alms giving should not be done in such a manner as likened to the blowing of a trumpet to draw attention to the one doing the giving. How often do we find ourselves giving money in the offering plate either letting someone see us give or folding the money in such a way to make it look more and bigger? This passage of Scripture is not saying that as you give, absolutely no one should see you giving, but it instead warns against drawing attention to yourself while giving. These hypocrites that Jesus spoke of wanted others to know that they were giving to the poor. Their giving may have been done in such a way that it added additional embarrassment to those who were poor. I know many times as I

would pastor my church that we would take up an offering for someone who was going through very difficult times. Most of the time, I did not announce who it was that we were giving the offering, but instead would tell our congregation that we had a very dear and needy family that God knows about that we could help by giving them an offering. Usually, without the congregation knowing who was suffering the need, they would still freely give and God would bless. We tried to do it without a lot of “fan-fare”. Also, we did it to avoid further embarrassment to the ones during their time of need.

The next warning is given as it applies to praying. Again, the warning is given to guard against praying to be seen of men. The hypocrites that the Lord spoke of were accused by the Lord of only being pretenders or *play actors*. They would pray in their synagogues

and on the corners or the very most visible part of the streets being sure to be seen of others. I am ashamed to say it, but I have found myself praying in public hoping that I was either saying my words carefully or that I made a “good impression” to those who were around me. God forgive me! I can safely say that this warning was given to the hypocrites, but it certainly may apply to us all.

The final warning is given as it applies to fasting. The hypocrites had gained the reputation of fasting with a “sad countenance” and even “disfiguring their faces” to get their desired effect. The Lord could see through their hypocrisy and he warned the true Christians not to worship in such a manner. It would be correct to say that the primary teaching of this sixth chapter is for those who worship God to do so in a way that brings glory to God alone and not to us. We need to be

careful to guard our hearts *against* having a hypocritical form of worship rather than a sincere worship that is pointed only to the Lord. Now, we shall look at several truths as it relates to prayer and worship as found in this great sixth chapter.

**Alms Giving Helps us to Have A  
Proper Appreciation As We Pray (Vv.  
1-4).**

While considering a most general use of the word alms, it refers to any righteous act that is performed towards someone else. It also refers to *the giving of a gift to the poor and needy*. What Jesus was warning against was doing this kind act towards the needy to draw attention to ourselves for the purpose of gaining the favor of men. If we look at this chapter with respect to how we should pray, it would not be stretching it to say that these three things that Jesus warned about, including prayer, gives us wonderful insight regarding how we should pray. The mentioning of *fasting, alms giving* and *prayer*, being grouped together, have purpose. There seems to be an interaction of these three components when proper praying is going on. We now will examine this relationship.

Alms giving illustrates every time that we give, we should be giving with a spirit of thanksgiving and appreciation for having the ability to do so. Our praying should both reflect the thankfulness to have something to give and the prayer to ask God to continue to provide for us the ability to give, so that we will continue to have that ability.

The entire concept of giving means that one has already received something from God, which gives one the ability to give in the first place. This is because, by right of creation, God owns everything and in his kind generosity, He has endowed us all with something. Everything that we touch or possess is only because He has provided us with those possessions. Whether it be the air that we breathe, or the food that we eat, or the clothes that we wear, He has provided these things for us. Because He has given us something that makes

us stewards. A steward is one who has been entrusted with the property that belongs to someone else. Remember, since we are stewards, we are accountable for our stewardship at the judgment seat of Christ. As we receive our blessings and our benefits from the Lord we need to constantly remind ourselves that it is the Lord who has prospered us, so that we might have opportunity to give in the first place.

As we pray, we should regard the three tenses of time. We should regard the past, the present and also the future. Those provisions which God has already provided us with, we ought to thank Him. As a prayer exercise, it would do us good to reflect back in thinking about the wonderful benefits that God has already given us in answer to prayer. When we pray, we pray remembering and also we pray thanking God for all that He has already done for us. When we allow our minds to reflect

back, we will remember so much that will not only cause us to be grateful, but will also cause us to have greater wisdom as we pray for present and future needs. In remembering the past, we should think about His past work that He did on the cross which certainly involved His work of redemption. I cannot begin thinking about His past work without first thinking of His work as it pertained to the cross, the place where he purchased my salvation. When praying, we first ought to pray thanking Him for saving us. Our giving of thanks is communicated as we pray and then shown visibly as we give. When we give alms to the poor, we are reflecting what Christ did when He gave Himself to us, who are also poor. His *kenosis* or His coming to the earth in humility clearly expresses this marvelous truth. (Philippians 2:5-11)

“Let this mind be you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the

form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

For what Christ did for us in the past should certainly cause us to pray with a thankful heart, and we also should thank God for our present blessings. We now have so much to be thankful for as the Lord gives us our *daily bread*. Psalms 68:19 expresses this truth when it says: “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with

benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.” This Scripture tells us, when it uses the expression *Selah*, to “stop and think about this”.

*Maybe, we should do just that...* We shall think on some of the benefits and the blessings that the Lord provides us. The Lord gives us the daily blessing of *strength*. No matter how weak we may be physically, there is still spiritual strength that is available every day as a new blessing. Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Strength is a wonderful thing to thank God for. To properly appraise just how weak we really are it would be appropriate to study often the Psalms and also the Book of Job. An example from Psalm 27, David says in verse number 13, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

David knew no matter how difficult life would be while here upon this earth, he had the belief in God that after the trials of this life were over that he could hope to enjoy the benefits of eternal life in heaven in the land of the living... the land where we will die no more. Heaven is also the land where there is no more suffering, no cancer, no heart problems, no sugar diabetes, nor sickness of any kind. It is a land of eternal rest from all of our labors; there will be no sorrows or suicides. What wonderful hope that David had as he wrote this Psalm. David having this belief helped him to commune with and to also pray to the Lord.

Now listen to Job in Job 23 as he describes his time of weakness: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat!" He goes on to say, starting in verse number 8, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot

perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” (Job 23:8) Job acknowledged that even though he could not always find God, God always knew where he was. This is the way praying by faith takes place... We do not always have a sense of where God is during our time of prayer. During times like these, we have no emotions that can direct us to where He is. There is no clearly defined trail that tells us exactly where He is in respect to our praying. But we may always be able to say as did Job, even if we do not know where He is, He certainly knows where we are!

There is a wonderful comfort which comes from us just knowing that He knows where we are and that He is with us while offering His protection and His

counsel that comes only from the Word of God. He will never leave us nor forsake us. That certainly is encouraging, just knowing that God is a very present help for whom we may always depend on. As we pray we should thank God for the present blessings that we enjoy which also includes *His abiding presence*.

In John 15:5 we may learn that there is a relationship that we may enjoy that is very necessary when balancing out our prayer life. We must have an abiding relationship. When we enjoy this kind of relationship, we are then able to experience a fusion of His love and presences into our very being. We then begin to reflect Him in our very essence. We become His *shadow* as Christians. When God created man in His own image, the root idea of the Hebrew word that was translated image is that of a shadow. God's first man Adam, then, was God's shadow. The

word shadow can denote our *closeness* to Him and also our *conforming* to Him. All of this happens when we are abiding in Him.

Notice John 15:5, "I am the vine: ye are the branches, He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing." Many years ago, I heard two ways of illustrating the concept of abiding spiritually. One was the illustration of logs burning on a fire. They would burn brightly while they were burning together or literally abiding as they burned. The word abide meant in this case to *burn together*. What a wonderful way to relate our abiding relationship to Him. We are abiding with Him when we are burning together. There is no greater experience as believers than to sense *the temperature or the heat* of God's presence. To enjoy the intensity of God's presence, we must burn with Him

through prayer and through the reading and the meditating upon His Word. His Word prepares our heart for abiding but also instructs us on the requirements for abiding. In this kind of praying, we are in a close intimate relationship. Our praying takes on an atmosphere of nearness as we abide with Him.

Another illustration that I remember was given of a mother hen placing and keeping her eggs underneath her own body. As long as the eggs were *abiding together* underneath her, they were safe. The little chicks while still in their eggs could not expect to survive unless they remained underneath the mother hen. Likewise, we cannot expect to survive a close spiritual relationship unless we abide underneath His divine presence. Praying then helps us to abide in His presence. Pure and simple, abiding is a relationship that we enjoy with Him to help protect us from all of the harms that are around us and to help us stay

in His presence. The word *abide* carries the meaning: *To rest or stay, to continue by enduring as though to remain with. It means to remain in the very presence with God having a proper atmosphere as we do.* We will look at this more closely when we examine the place of secret prayer, *the prayer closet.*

As we continue to meditate, we also may enjoy the gift of God's love that cannot be fathomed. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Christ literally gave Himself as *alms* to the church since alms giving is defined as a righteous act or the giving to the poor. What a wonderful example is He! Who is poorer spiritually than we are? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). It would do us all good as we pray to be reminded of the eternal gift of Love that He brought

to us and then freely gave to us.

He humbled Himself and then took on the form of a man to exercise this gift to us. (Philippians 4:5-11). He even made himself of no reputation as He personally identified with us all. No matter how much we may have in the material realm, we are all so very poor spiritually. Alms giving, praying, preaching, serving, teaching, singing, and ministering would have no purpose or value if it were done without having the love of God. As we pray, the intimacy that we enjoy is *love based*. Where there is no love there can be no true intimacy. The love of Christ is the *gluing bond that holds us together*. That same appreciated love is what brings us perpetually unto Him and allows us to pray without ceasing. When you pray without ceasing you will continue to think about that special Someone that you really love. And that Someone is the Lord Jesus Christ. As you love the Lord,

you will in a most intimate way speak, talk and pray to Him. As you speak and talk to Him, you are in reality praying to Him. At least this is so, if it involves the intimacy and the love that we have just described. You will discover that the more that you begin to love Him, the more that you will pray to Him. This is what is meant by praying without ceasing. The idea of praying without ceasing comes from an expression which means *having a hacking cough*. When you have a hacking cough, you are subject to coughing most any time. Likewise, as you pray without ceasing, you are subject to praying most anytime.

Another benefit that we may offer gratitude to the Lord is for the *power that He gives us*. The power may be in two forms. One is a power that involves those strengthening qualities that we need to help sustain us and then the power that gives us the authority or the

right to exercise our ministry and our calling in a most practical way. When we pray, we should certainly recognize the need for power as it involves having His strength and authority (John 1:12; Acts 1:16; Romans 1:8).

### **Fasting Will Help Us Have a Proper Attitude as We Pray (Vv. 16-18)**

The Lord mentioned these three exercises of faith when He was bringing a harsh rebuke against the Pharisees and the hypocrites for their public display of worship. At the best, what they were doing was only a religious pretense. He mentioned alms giving, fasting and praying and how the Pharisees *for a show* were only abusing their worship as it involved these three areas of worship. The second thing that the Lord mentioned was prayer as it pertained to the prayer closet or to secret prayer. Yet, I wish to consider fasting before I consider the prayer closet. I am not doing it to suggest that the order should be changed, God forbid such a notion. I am doing it to emphasize the relationships that these three have to each other as it pertains to prayer. I wanted to make some connecting comments as it involved the

prayer closet and chose to discuss fasting now.

Fasting seems to be for the purpose of setting a proper “attitude” when we pray. Jesus even told the disciples that they did not need to fast when He was with them... Notice, this Scripture: 14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast (Matt. 9:14,15).

For a person to truly mourn, his attitude should be that of a mourner. This seems to be what the Lord Jesus Christ is implying, here. Fasting in the Scriptures was done to make sure that the heart is adjusted to the need that is being prayed for. Examples of this are seen in the early church as the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas as ministers (Acts 13:1-3).  
1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and

teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Prayer and fasting showed the church's proper spirit and their proper attitude towards Paul and Barnabas' ministry. The ministry was important enough to this church that they were willing to pray and fast for those who would be sent out from them. Prayer and fasting qualifies the ministry in a very Spiritual way and then gives practical significance to the work of the Lord. The same practice of praying and fasting was done by the churches in Galatia as recorded in Acts 14:21-23. If

we understand this to be a pattern for our churches to follow, we may see a greater blessing of the Lord upon us as we do. Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, while going through persecutions and trials while in the ministry would pray often. Are we not commanded to imitate him, even as Paul imitated the Lord Jesus Christ as indicated in 1 Corinthians 11:1. Both Christ and Paul give us great examples in which to follow. In the Old Testament, we have record where the people of God fasted when they were seeking divine help. They would do it during the times of war or when under threat of war. Israel did their fasting during these critical times. David did it when there was grief over a loved one being sick and dying. He fasted when his child by Bathsheba lay sick and dying. Ahab and Daniel fasted when they were seeking God's forgiveness; Ezra did when seeking God's protection and Nehemiah did when he heard the report from Hanani

concerning the walls being broken down and the gates being burned with fire. The Bible tells us that Nehemiah wept, and mourned, fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (Nehemiah 1:4).

In the New Testament, fasting took place when Christ was dealing with temptations. Also, as already indicated when servants and ministers were being sent out from the church and when the church was praying for strength and power to do the Lord's work. When fasting is going on, it should be done in conjunction with prayer. When fasting is properly done, it will humble the soul (Psalm 35:13) and it will chasten the soul (Psalm 69:10). The prayers of the humble or more likely to be heard as we learn in the following verses from the Book of Ezra: (Ezra 8:21-23) <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

We should fast when we are being faced with difficult temptations. We may fast when we are praying for the healing of someone or when going through great trials and tribulations. As a church, we should fast when calling a pastor or sending out missionaries. Churches have often entered into a period of great difficulty and confusion when calling a pastor, because there has been no praying and fasting going on. We fast when we desire God's help; we are acknowledging that we are helpless

without Him. Prayer is attended by fasting when we get to the point of understanding our total weakness apart from Him.

**The Prayer Closet Will Help Us Have  
the Proper Atmosphere When We  
Pray...**

**Matthew 6:5-15**

¶ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ¶ 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. ¶ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ¶ Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. ¶ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup> Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup> But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Prayer is important as these verses indicate and also E.M. Bounds indicates in his book the value of prayer as it also includes the prayer closet: "Purpose in Prayer". His book has many wonderful quotes that show his emphasis upon the subject of prayer. Notice these excerpts with the page numbers being in parenthesis, before we return to our verses from our Text...

"God shapes the world by prayer. (9);

Prayer outlives the lives of those who uttered them; outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world. (9) The prayers of God's saints are the capital stock in heaven by which Christ carries on His great work upon earth. (10); Ask of me is the one condition God puts in the very advance and triumph of His cause. (11); The secret of success in Christ's kingdom is the ability to pray. The most important lesson that we can learn is how to pray. (12); The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the Great Jehovah yields. Prayer is the sovereign remedy. Robert Hall (13); You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed. (20, quoting Dr. A. J. Gordon); This is not a praying age; it is an age of great activity, of great movements, but one in which the tendency is very strong to stress the seen and the material and to neglect and discount the unseen and the spiritual. (47); Prayer is the greatest

of all forces, because it honors God and brings Him into active aid. (48); We cannot run our spiritual operations on the prayers of the past generation. (47); Prayer is our most formidable weapon, but the one in which we are the least skilled, the most averse to its use. (48); The first and last stages of holy living are crowned with praying. It is a life trade. (48); We are in danger of substituting churchly work for prayer and holy living. A holy life does not live in the (prayer) closet, but it cannot live without the prayer closet. (49); None but praying leaders can have praying follows. The greatest will be of reformers and apostles, who can set the Church to praying. (51); Prayer is not the foe to work, it does not paralyze activity. It works mightily; prayer itself is the greatest work. (52); The (prayer) closet... is the battlefield of the church; its citadel; the scene of heroic and unearthly conflicts. (52); Men ought to pray much and apply themselves to it

with energy and perseverance. The deep things of God are learned nowhere else. (53); Christ puts importunity as a distinguishing characteristic of true praying. We must not only pray, but we must pray with great urgency, with intentness and with repetition. (55) (referring to the importunate widow) The secret of prayer and its success lie in its urgency. We must press our prayers upon God. (55); We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done by importunate prayer. (57); Pray and never faint, is the motto Christ gives us for praying. (60); Asking is the rule of the kingdom. (quoting Spurgeon) Jesus taught that perseverance is the essential element of prayer. (62) Men ought always to pray, and not faint. (Jesus) The always speaks for itself. Intimacy requires development. (65) Always is never out of conscious touch with the Father. (66) The Gospel cannot live, fight, or conquer without prayer-prayer unceasing, instant and ardent.

(72) Secret praying is the test, the gauge, the conserver of man's relation to God. (74); If there be anything I do, if there be anything I leave undone, let me be perfect in prayer. After all, whatever God may appoint, prayer is the great thing. (Henry Martyn) (76); The great business of praying is a hurried, petty, starved, beggarly business with most men, Put the men to praying, then politics will be cleansed, business will be the thriftier, the Church will be holier, the home will be sweeter." (77)

These are quotes that are found in E. M. Bounds book that are worthy of meditating on and perhaps by listing these as we did, it will create a greater respect and appreciation in our hearts for the value of praying. May we now return to our Text and examine the passage that pertains to the Lord's Prayer.

In the verses found in our Text, (5-18), the Lord gives us the definition of

the way prayers should be prayed; they should be prayed and directed towards the Lord. This cannot be overly stated. This is absolutely essential to communicating and also communing with God. It should be done in a manner that shuts the world out and creates a proper atmosphere for prayer. We are living in a very difficult and loud world. Much of the difficulty comes from not having a communing spirit while we pray. We pray usually in a crowded environment or we pray not being able to shut out the distractions which make up our loud world. The missionary to the Indians, David Brainerd prayed and as he did he shut out the world about him. David Brainerd knew what it was to have a heart for God as expressed in his prayer diaries. Notice what A. J. Gordon says about David Brainerd. A. J. Gordon has written: "David Brainerd did his greatest work by prayer. He was in the depths of the forests alone, unable to speak the language of the

Indians, but he spent whole days in prayer.” Lonely praying is not always “alone” prayer; when one gets alone while praying, he is alone before God, but he is also alone with God.

David Brainerd proved by his getting alone with God, his absolute dependence upon God as shown in the following entry. He wrote in his diary June 14, 1742, “I set aside this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work I have in view, of preaching the gospel. Just at night, the Lord visited me marvelously in prayer; I think my soul never was in such agony as before...I was in such agony till near dark, that I was wet with sweat.”

His dedication, focus and his intensity are revealed in this entry in his diary for April 20, 1743:

“Set apart this day for fasting and prayer for the bestowment of divine

grace; especially that all my spiritual affliction and inward distresses might be sanctified to my soul. Endeavored to remember the goodness of God to me in the year past, this being my birthday. Am now arrived at the age of twenty-five years. My soul was pained to think that I had lived so little to the glory of God. I spent the day in the woods alone, and there poured out my complaint to God.”

Another reference to Brainerd’s diary, this one from July 21, 1744, shows plainly what it means to agonize in prayer:

“In prayer I was exceedingly enlarged, and my soul was drawn out as ever I remember it to have been in my life. I was in such anguish, and pleaded with such earnestness that when I rose from my knees I could scarcely walk straight. The sweat ran down my face and body. I was wholly free from selfish ends in my

supplications for the poor Indians...Thus I spent the evening, praying incessantly for divine assistance and that I might not be self-dependent...I continued in this frame all evening and night. While I was asleep, I dreamed of these things, and when I waked, the first thing I thought of was this great work of pleading for God against Satan.”

May we all be challenged by this old prayer warrior to do the same? It would do us much good to study the diaries of David Brainerd and learn what it is to really find the right atmosphere for prayer as we enter into our own personal prayer closets. I believe that more than a literal prayer closet, as some would insist, it means that we should have a hallowed place that we can both shut out *the loud world about us* and also create *an atmosphere for true prayer worship*. Recently, a person very dear to me was having some

domestic issues and she and her husband had agreed to not focus on their problem or even on each other, but to get alone with God and place their focus upon Him. They agreed to pray and fast and part of this agreement meant that they would not communicate with each other for a certain period of time. They chose for a number of hours not to text, phone, or email each other so that they could quietly withdraw from each other and focus only upon the Lord and find out what He wanted to tell them about their marriage.

This is part of what it means in a contemporary setting, as we shut out everything including our modern technologies, to both speak to the Lord through prayer and let Him speak to us by His Word. When the husband and wife did this, nice things started happening... Instead of them blaming each other, they began to see their own

deficiencies and their own shortcomings. As I talked to them, she would say: "I cannot believe that I was so selfish; I only thought of those things that would be convenient and good for me." She went on to say; "I would not even want to be married to *me* when I think of the way that I treated him, but now those things that I thought were so important to me are no longer that important."

The change that took place in her thinking all happened after she began to fast and then withdrew herself unto a quiet place and both spoke to the Lord and let the Lord speak to her. This is an example of how prayer and fasting may help in a crisis situation. God does not just want us to come to Him during a crisis situation. The prayer closet should be a regular means of shutting out the world and getting alone with God even when you are not experiencing a crisis. The husband also

began to recognize his own personal shortcomings when he withdrew himself from *the loud world* and let the Lord personally speak to his heart. He said: "I have been such a hard father; I don't like who I am either..." They did not take time to recognize who they really were until they got alone with God. It was after they got alone with God that they were able to reconcile to each other. He went on to say: "There is now a spark in our relationship that has been missing!"

The above true example shows how the prayer closet has Spiritual significance, but it also has very practical significance as well. The prayer closet is both for God and us...

When Jesus prayed giving us the example of how we are to pray, He did so in respect to closet prayer or as this writer describes it as private prayer:

"This prayer of Jesus is intently focused upon God, not the self or

others. And the private room is worthy of prayer because it helps the one who prays to focus on God. Jesus' prayer, the private room, and brevity keep the one who prays from looking anywhere else than to God. The secret chamber also reminds the disciple that prayer primarily has to do with one's relationship with God. As the marriage chamber represents the intimacy of that relationship, so the prayer chamber is the place of openness and closeness with God. Like the Holy of Holies, it is not open to the public, nor is it a place to be preoccupied with the opinions of others." (Arnquist)

**PARALLEL PICTURES OF ALMS  
GIVING, FASTING AND CLOSET  
PRAYER...**

Three key words should emerge from this study. The first word is *appreciation*. The second is *attitude* and the third is *atmosphere*. These words were first used in our study to describe how alms giving shows that we should have a proper appreciation for already answered prayer and then fasting helps us to develop a proper attitude as we pray. Then, the third example illustrates to us how closet prayer reveals the need for us having a proper atmosphere as we pray. When prayer is going on in our lives and there is proper prayer balance it will impact every facet of our spiritual existence. Using these *three key words*, may I first illustrate this to be true in our church worship?

When proper prayer preparation has taken place as we proceed to worship God in our church services, we will

come to the meeting place with a proper appreciation of who God is and a proper appreciation of His worth. After all, that is what worship is all about. Our appreciation should be apparent the moment that we walk into the meeting place to begin our Christian worship as it involves the church. We should walk in with an *attitude of gratitude* for God having saved us from the eternal Lake of Fire and then having the absolute hope of spending all eternity with Him. Then, there should be the gratitude of being yoked into the family of God while enjoying the many family benefits that are made possible by having such a yoke. There should be the gratitude of having a place to worship and then learning the ways of God which will protect us while we yet live and have our being. This kind of gratitude should really be an appreciation for having the presence of God in our very midst.

One should also have a proper

*attitude* while worshiping. There is something desperately wrong when one comes to the church with an improper attitude. There is nothing more killing to the spirit of a good service than having someone walk into a worship service with either bitterness or some kind of anger that has not been properly dealt with. Just as one should properly prepare his heart for praying, so should we prepare our hearts for worship. Going to a regular church service should be *irregular* in the sense that we cannot preplan the ways and the workings of God. We should anticipate great things coming from God. There ought to be an excitement when one bows before God when praying in just knowing that he truly has a prayer hearing and prayer answering God. That same exciting anticipation should also mark our Christian worship. We should always approach worship with a proper attitude. If you do not have a proper worshiping attitude, then you

must strive to get to the place of worship in which you will. Is there ever a good reason to not have a heart prepared for worship?

The third aspect of having proper balance in your worship means that you enter into the place of worship seeking a proper *atmosphere*. A sense of God's presence is cultivated through prayer. When one enters the prayer closet, he may do so and then find a proper atmosphere. That same kind of atmosphere will also be in our services when there is proper worship going on. There is nothing more enjoyable for the Christian than to be in a worship service described as the "old timers" would say: "It is better felt than telt"... or they would say, "God shore showed up today". This is what is meant by having a Godly worshiping atmosphere.

These three words, *appreciation*, *attitude*, and *atmosphere* can also be used in describing a strong Christian

marriage relationship. For example, the husband should prepare his heart towards his wife by having proper appreciation for her. Prayer could help him in this way. If he prays for his wife and with his wife and does so with gratitude back to the Lord, then his marriage will be stronger. He needs to have a proper attitude towards her, himself and his marriage. When he does, his marriage should be stronger. I have seen marriages destroyed because there is no love or gratitude expressed for each other. The glue that held them close seems to be gone... It may have begun in a much unnoticed way. They just started taking each other for granted. The appreciation that they should have had for each other is gone. They only existed in their relationship, but neither of them was enjoying it.

Then the second word is *attitude* as it applies to marriage. There ought to be pro-activity as it comes to the way that

we think about our marriages. By this expression, I mean that we should be actively engaged in our thinking to insure a proper marriage attitude. Our attitude is formed by our thinking. Proverbs 23:7 say, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." We need to prayerfully form our thinking in conjunction with the Word of God as we develop a proper attitude towards our mate. Using these three words as "check points" will help us in all of our relationships as it involves prayer. The third word in this list is *atmosphere*. Having a proper atmosphere is vital to a healthy marriage.

To illustrate this third word atmosphere, I asked my wife to give me several word thoughts that came to her mind as she thought of having proper atmosphere. She immediately replied that there needs to be a "trusting atmosphere". By that, she meant that there needs to be a place where two

people feel that they can “safely abide” with each other. In this state they do not feel threatened. They have the calm assurance that there is no one else who will successfully challenge their relationship. You may ask, “What does this really have to do with prayer?” Every part of our existence should be prayer supported. Each mate should ask God to give them the strength that they need to be trustworthy. Without marriage trust, the marriage is weakened.

Another thing that she immediately mentioned that ought to be a part of a good marriage atmosphere is “Safety”. She said a wife needs to feel that she is protected and safely cared for by her marriage partner. The wife should pray for that to be so and the husband should pray and ask God to give him the qualities that he needs to be a good protector. To balance out his prayer life, he may read in Ephesians where it says:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” (Ephesians 5:25) Notice, how the husband might pray as he applies the Scriptures to his praying: “Dear Lord, I want to thank you for my wife and please help me to love, protect and give myself to her even as you gave Yourself to me; thanks for being my example and pattern. I need you, Dear Lord even as she needs me...” This is a way that prayer can be balanced out with the Word of God and we should always strive to find a prayer principle in the Word of God as we pray to help us to *balance our prayer life*.

This last statement is a very important aspect of prayer balance, meaning there needs to be a prayer principle that is found in the Word of God to help one achieve proper prayer balance. We will consider this by using some Scriptures to show how to balance out one’s prayer life...



## **Applying Scriptural Principles As You Balance Out Your Prayer Life**

In this next section, I will give you examples of Bible principles that may be applied as you are *balancing out your prayer life*. When you pray, you should always do so in respect to God's Word, otherwise; prayer will not achieve its real purpose. The *duty* of praying requires, as we have already taught, both *direction* and intended *purpose*. Prayer should never be a vain show or a vain repetition of words simply in a ritualistic manner. Prayer should have connection forming a triangular relationship which involves the one praying, the Word of God and the

God who answers prayer. If either of these is weak or missing, then praying is greatly affected. May we now notice this first example of prayer principles? This first example is an instruction on how to pray for your persecutors.

**Matthew 5:44** But I say unto you,

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

The instructions that the Lord gives here is very different from the world's mentality as it involves dealing with one's enemy or antagonist. A world mindset is to "get even". Christ begins by saying "Love your enemies..." while blessing them that curse you. As you pray, you may begin something like this: "Dear Lord, help me to love the enemy that I despise. For what that person has done to me, I can only wish him harm unless you help me to have your Spirit as I pray." "Lord, I know also that I have treated others wrong and certainly have you, yet you loved and forgave me; please help the person 'which despitefully uses me' to see the error of their ways and learn to do well." The example that I use here shows how we can use the Scriptures to guide us

and to help us *balance out our prayer life*. We will now look at our second example:

**Matthew 9:38** Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Without going into great detail as to how this verse is used within its context, we will just make a simple application as to how to pray for workers in the ministry. We may approach the work of the Lord as indicated by our Text as it uses the word labourers and also the word harvest. In ministry there needs to be those who serve as labourers and then there is the potential of having a harvest. Our prayers should be formed with this as an example. When we do so, we are exercising faith. We may word our prayers similar to this: "Dear Lord, our church needs to see a great harvest of souls and you are the Lord of

the harvest. Within your sovereign purpose, I ask you to provide graciously the workers that we need, that they will feel the responsibility and the burden that they should have to work in your vineyard. I pray that you will create in the hearts of your people an urgency to do the work, for night soon cometh and we will not be able to work.”

**Matthew 26:41** Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

We would have no clue as to how we should pray as it pertains to facing and dealing with our temptations, if it were not for Scriptures such as this to guide us in our praying. We are to watch as we pray, and that literally means to “chase away sleep” or to exercise diligence as we pray. The tempter is an aggressor and is very malicious in his aggression. Satan would like nothing

more than to aggressively bring us all, who name the name of Christ, into a compromised state. One of his most used tactics is that of temptation.

Notice, how I am instructed by this verse of Scripture to pray, “Dear Lord, I am willing to do right and to resist temptations, but I understand from your Word that my spirit is willing but my flesh is weak. Knowing this to be so, I desire with all diligence to pray that I enter not into temptation. I need you to help me even as I exercise all diligence.”

**Mark 11:24** Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

Prayer cannot be disconnected from faith and still be Scriptural prayer. Prayer and faith are bridged together. Believing the Scriptures to be true, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” our prayers

should be faith built by God's Word. Using this prayer verse, we are instructed as to how we pray and balance out our prayers with God's Word. We may word our prayers something like this: "Our heavenly Father, I have a need that only you can provide. I am exercising faith and trust in your Word and because I believe your Word to be true, I am qualified by your righteousness and by your invitation to make my request known unto Thee. If you can be glorified by meeting this need and it is done according to your will; then I pray thy will be done."

Sometimes we become discouraged when we do not immediately see our prayers answered. We must remember that no Scripture is of private interpretation and that Scriptural Truth must be balanced out throughout the Word of God. This is very much so in respect to our praying. We may approach God and say, "I had faith that

my prayers would be answered and they were not; why not?" There may not be a simple apparent answer to this question, but may I suggest an example of why a prayer is not answered. The one who is praying has sin in his life and by having such has hindered his prayers from being answered because of that sin. Another reason could be that the prayer is not according to God's will or it would violate some aspect of Truth if God answered the prayer. We call this "praying amiss".

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

Here is a prayer principle or instruction that involves a person praying for Spiritual endurance. The quality of enduring during times of conflict does not come automatically. There must be the benefit of prayer. We pray for strength for withstanding the

enemy or the ability to continue with patience as we are facing our life struggles. Those who do not embrace Christianity, have no understandings for dealing with trials as would a Christian. I was recently speaking to someone who was describing a person that she works with who was going through tremendous pressures at home. She was in a second marriage and there was great conflict as it involved a small child from her previous marriage. It seemed that the mother was unwilling to let the husband discipline the child because of his excessive anger. He seemed to be angry with his wife because he was jealous of her showing more affection to the child than to him. This anger began to spill over into the disciplining of the small child. He was venting his anger and frustration on the child whom he resented. As this person was called upon to listen as the lady then vented her feelings, it soon became apparent that the lady had absolutely

no spiritual discernment as to the way God intends for the marriage and the home to operate. When this person would suggest those principles that are embedded in the Word of God as to how a home should operate, she would immediately reject what she was being told because of her humanistic teachings. Because of her world mindset and her world value system, what she was being told was absolutely foreign to her. Therefore she only could faint because she did not know how to pray. Consider this prayer example of how she may have prayed...

“Dear Father in Heaven, I am unable to cope with this issue that involves my failing marriage. I have had it brought to my attention that I need to learn the ways of God as it applies to me being a wife and mother. Please instruct me both from your Word and from those Wise councilors that you will allow me to talk to. Let me absolutely apply the

principles that are found in your word that will make me a better wife and mother. I also pray for my husband, that he will have a teachable spirit and will also learn the ways of God. I pray that he will see his jealousy and his anger as being sin and that I will not give him reason to be jealous of my son. I understand that some of your teachings may seem foreign to me, but I ask you to correct my thinking that I might be conformed to your Word and to become more like Christ.”

The above was an illustration borrowed from real life as to how we may balance out our prayers with the Word of God. In this instance, it taught us how to pray lest we faint...

**2 Thessalonians 3:1** Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:

The above verse is a prayer

instruction that tells us how to pray for our fellow labourers in the ministry. We should pray for our own ministry as we serve Him, but we should also pray for the ministry of others. I am so deeply grateful for those who pray for me as I minister the Gospel. I will never know this side of heaven how much that I have been helped because people prayed for me. Even as I write this, this verse brings conviction to me that I should pray more for the ministry of others. The following is an example of how such prayer may be exercised: "Dear Lord, bless Bob as he goes into the prisons to minister to the inmates. There are many different voices being heard by those behind bars. Help them to hear my dear Brother Bob as he preaches the Word of God to them. Help him to have clarity of mind and to have the unction of God as he speaks. I pray that many souls will be saved as a result of his labors. Bless him, Lord; I pray, in Jesus' name".

**James 5:14** 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:

This is another example of a prayer instruction that shows how to pray for the sick and how the person is to be prayed for. This verse does not mean that prayer is to be exercised in this manner every time that one is sick... Yet, it should help one to be mindful of the way prayer is made for the sick. First, there is a question asked: "Is any sick among you?" There is sensitivity on the part of the ones who make up the congregation, meaning there should be a mindfulness of the state of those who are around us. Then there is the part that the sick person is involved in: "let him call for the elders of the church". How many times does the pastor get rebuked for not checking on the sick, when he knew nothing about it. As a principle, if the sick person if

able, he should communicate his need to the church. Obviously, if he is not able, then there should be someone representing that person who will contact the church or pastor on his behalf. This would solve much confusion in the lack of communication, which says: "I thought that you knew that I was sick..."

Now, as a prayer principle, prayer should be done on the sick person's behalf. There are further instructions as it involves the confessing of their faults one to another. A prayer may be worded in this manner as it involves these instructions given to us in the Book of James.

"Our Father, we pray for our sick brother knowing that you are the Divine Healer and that all healing comes from you. We have confessed our faults one to another and now sincerely desire to see this person healed. Please help us to learn from our sickness how fragile our

lives are and to remember that the origin of sickness began in the Garden of Eden when man first sinned. May Your strength and healing rest upon us all...”

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

This is a national prayer, but it is also a prayer that is being done because of Paul's love for his kindred as chapter nine clearly teaches us. It is true that Paul is praying for Israel in a national sense, knowing that they have a Spiritual blindness, but he is also burdened about those who are his close kin (Romans 9:1-3). This teaches us that we should have a love for all those about us, praying for them even as we pray for those who make up our own families. Clearly, this should teach us to pray for all to be saved. As we live, enjoying the benefits of God's grace, we

should also do as did Paul, pray for others.

I remember years ago visiting a pastor that had such a passion and a burden for world missions and had especially targeted the country of Peru. He had a large room inside his church that had a very large world map. It was so large that each city of any size was on this map and even much smaller towns were printed on the map. He told me that his church would use this dedicated room to come in and pick a city and pray specifically for that city and country. This was a regular ministry that was ongoing for him and his church.

This pastor has gone on to be with the Lord, but I wish that I could just sit down and talk to him about how their prayers were answered over a period of time, because this church was willing to consistently pray for the world. This may be an idea of how our churches

also can aggressively pray for the world even as Paul did.

Paul was so intently concerned about his loved ones and his people that he was willing to face the curse of eternal damnation if that would only mean that his lost kinsmen could be saved... Such passion and such love marked Paul as he prayed. Paul was certainly praying the prayer of intercession when he prayed this way. In a modern day version of Paul's prayer, it would go something like this: "Dear Lord, I pray for my lost son who is living in sin and rebellion. He does not even acknowledge that he is the sinner that he is. I pray that he will come to the knowledge of the Truth and be gloriously saved. I know that it is not possible, Lord, but I am willing to die taking his hell for him, if he would only come to you in faith..." I hope that you sense the sincerity that is being expressed by this one who prays even

as Paul did.

These examples of ways that we might pray, that have been given or only examples. You should personally word your prayers as you would pray them. The fervency that you pray will be indicated by the way that you pray your prayers. It is not the style and the form that you pray your prayers that is the most important; it is the fervency of your prayers. Paul was illustrating great intensity as he prayed; his words illustrated that to be so. His words were a reflection of his heart. Your prayer is the heart speaking... We sometimes say what he said was "heart felt".