

Draw Closer to God Through Prayer (Slide 1)
On Bended Knee I Come!

Reading: 2 Chronicles 6:12-21

I'm taking some of my thoughts for this lesson from an article written in the *The Gospel Message* from *Brother Sam Woody*. I will indicate in this presentation when I do.

I have personally subscribed to *The Gospel Message* for many years and have always enjoyed the lesson contents as well as benefited from its encouragement.

Every lesson I present is always something that I need to hear and to think about and this particular lesson is no exception.

Let's start this lesson by asking the question, *"How often do I pray?"*

Life on earth tends to get quite complicated. As much as we would like it to run along smoothly, it simply does not. You might say it becomes quite a tangled mess.

Sometimes it's like trying to untangle the Christmas tree lights we wish to string on our tree that we hurriedly stored away last Christmas.

Unfortunately, many remain tangled in life's folly because they fail to use the only true resource that can help one out of the tangled web we have so foolishly weaved. *That is on bended knee, in prayer, to almighty God.*

Apostle Peter (**1 Peter 5:7**) encourages us to *"cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for you."* This clearly illustrates that God wants to hear from us. He wants to help us and He wants to help because He loves us and wants what's best for us. That's what a great parent does and desires.

If the The Psalms written by David are songs, they are also Prayerful Songs. David writes in:

Psalm 27:11-13 (Slide 2)

¹¹ Teach me Your way, O LORD,

And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.

¹² Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;

For false witnesses have risen against me,

(Slide 3) And such as breathe out violence.

¹³ I would have lost heart, unless I had believed

That I would see the goodness of the LORD

In the land of the living.

I am struck by the phrase: ***“Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries”***

Though we unfortunately share the same spiritual adversary, he speaks of adversaries that physically want to harm him.

We have adversaries that are formidable when our spiritual connection with God is left unprotected because it is too often idle, complacent or just in the free space of outright apathy.

This entanglement (our adversaries) can be caused by the cares of the world. Some are entangled in addiction, sensual desire and the want of earthly satisfaction. The true cause of which is devilish and the effect is eternal jeopardy. This is less likely to happen if our relationship with God is strengthened by prayer.

Sometimes we are fraught with anxiety and concern. A strong bond with God through prayer can alleviate anxiety and fear.

Sometimes we devote too much time to activities that aren't inherently wrong, simply time consuming, drawing away our attention to prioritizing prayer in our lives.

Apostle Paul encourages us to ***"pray without ceasing."*** Does He mean that every waking moment should be on bended knee? No. However, there are many opportunities to be on the alert to pray.

Brother Woody in his article gives us some simple math to consider when it comes to our prayer life. He starts by asking; *"How often do you pray?"*

Let's say someone prays 5 times a day and each prayer is 2 minutes in length. At the end of the week we have amassed a total of 70 minutes of communication with the Lord.

For simplicity, let's add 30 minutes to cover worship service. The grand total for the week is 100 minutes. There are 10,080 minutes in a calendar week.

By these calculations, our prayer life consists of less than 1% of communication with our God. Is that enough?

If we give ourselves the benefit of the doubt and round up to 1% will that keep our relationship strong? Will we really draw closer to God?

1% of something can equal to have some value. \$1,000,000 equals \$10,000. "Hey, not bad." You retain some wealth if you had a million, yet, you lost all but 1%.

You can lose all of your wealth and though it would be difficult, with hard work you can get it all back.

But time is a different commodity. If you waste or lose time, you can never get it back. Time is actually spent. Once it's gone it's gone.

You miss your child's ballgame, graduation or any other event, you can't go back in time to see it again. As far as I can know, going back in time or going forward in time for that matter is fantasy.

Time is something that is difficult for many to donate. It truly emphasizes the concept that it is often easier to get someone to donate their money than to donate their time.

If we have a best friend that moves far away and we spend 1% of our time communicating with that person, how long will it be before that friendship begins to fade? How long will it be before our communication is less frequent and maybe even stops altogether?

I wonder if God feels that way if we devote so little of our time in prayer.

Jesus the Son of God patterned His life around prayer. In other words, He made time to pray a priority.

Mark 1:35 (Slide 4)

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

This translation uses the word "***solitary***" which means "*deserted.*" No one was around. Even His disciples didn't know where He had gone.

He needed a place to pray. To communicate with the Father. Jesus dictates the motivation and the reasoning behind praying in private in:

Matthew 6:5-7 (Slide 5)

⁵ "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, (Slide 6) and when you have shut

your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

What's the summary of the entire lesson about communicating to God in prayer? In our personal communication, our prayer to God in a deserted place, we are sharing our deepest concerns or maybe our deepest inner feelings. Something extremely personal.

Perhaps we are praying about our own personal adversary. An addiction or secret trouble.

Perhaps we pray because of our fears or our anxiety about something that is going on in our life.

Perhaps we are thanking Him for something He has done for us that no one else knows about. Maybe we are praying on behalf of another or about a relationship we may have with someone else that has become difficult.

Perhaps we are struggling at work or home.

3 Things are certain: (Slide 7)

1. If we don't have a relationship with God because of the infrequency of our communication then we have created a circumstance as if we are opening up to a stranger. *How many personal-intimate things are you going to talk about to a stranger?*
2. If we don't pray with faith, that is, not only will God hear but that we believe He can untangle our troubles, then our prayer is in vain.
3. If we don't pray and believe that God is already aware of our situation, then we have lost the effectiveness of our communication.

Through the prophecy of Isaiah we learn that God's elect, that is; His people that He already knows what is happening in their lives:

Isaiah 65:24 (Slide 8)

"It shall come to pass

That before they call, I will answer;

And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Jeremiah says that God is waiting to answer our prayer:

Jeremiah 33:3 (Slide 9)

'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

Jeremiah wrote these words while in prison, undoubtedly spending much time in prayer.

Jesus prayed before many big events before and during His ministry. *"After His baptism, before choosing His disciples, during miracles, in the Garden as He faced the chilling hand of death and during His crucifixion on the cross."*

Brother Woody in his article gives us 5 things to consider to help us grow closer to God: (Slide 10)

1. *Quality over quantity.* We don't pray to impress God with what we say or how much we say. We pray with a heart reliant on Him.
2. *Pray without ceasing.* As we stated earlier, this doesn't mean every moment rather it is a state of readiness with God always on our mind.
3. *Remember Who you're talking to.* Approach God with the respect that He is due. In reverence and trust. The Psalmist writes: **Psalm 145:3**
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.

4. *Make Prayer a habit.* I have personally found that there are several times during my day that are perfect for communication. I try to utilize that time effectively.
5. *Believe-James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.* If we doubt the power of prayer we likely are truly doubting God's power and if He will even really hear us.

Pray with belief! He does hear! It may not always be the answer we are hoping for or expecting, but in His way according to His will He does answer.

Invitation

Today our prayer is for those who have heard the Gospel call to make the commitment to become a child of God by putting on Christ in Baptism. If you have not done so, may we encourage you to be baptized today.

If you are in Christ but need prayer for any reason, we are ready and waiting to lift up your petition to the one true God.

Please let us know how we may assist you this day.....

Reading

2 Chronicles 6:12-21

¹² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands ¹³ (for Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and he stood on it, knelt down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven); ¹⁴ and he said: "LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven or on earth like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. ¹⁵ You have kept what You promised

Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. ¹⁶ Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk in My law as you have walked before Me.' ¹⁷ And now, O LORD God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David.

¹⁸ "But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! ¹⁹ Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You: ²⁰ that Your eyes may be open toward this temple day and night, toward the place where You said You would put Your name, that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. ²¹ And may You hear the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive.

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