

OLUSOLA A. AREOGUN



**ARE YOU
PRAYING OR
COMPLAINING?**

Practical Insights for a Life of Answered Prayers

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*Practical Insights for a Life
of Answered Prayers*

Olusola A. Areogun

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Introduction

Prayer is something that almost everybody does, but most people don't know whether their prayers have been answered or not, and many don't even care. The truth, however, is that everybody wants answers to prayers. I believe that the Holy Spirit wants me to deal with the subject of prayer in this book because prayer is a very common but greatly misunderstood subject.

Are you really praying or are you just complaining? Many people don't know that they are not praying in the biblical sense of praying; instead, they are actually complaining. Complaining is not welcome in heaven because there's no complaint bureau in the presence of God. There is only a heavenly Father, who is concerned about His own children and is willing to answer their prayers.

In this book, we will look at how you can become consistent with your prayer hour, how to be sure God has heard your prayer, how to enter into your closet to pray, prayer lessons from the life of Jesus, what to say to your mountain, and how thanksgiving

will work for you. Some say the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. I trust God that when you finish reading this book, you would have moved from a willing spirit to a conquered flesh.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend Olusola A. Areogun

Osogbo, Nigeria

May 2012

Chapter 1

Are You Praying Or Complaining?

THERE IS SOMETHING about prayers that you have to take note of—there are laws that govern answered prayers. Not all prayers are answerable. Not all prayers get an audience with God.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (1 John 3: 22)

And this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.

And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition that we desired of him. (1 John 5: 14-15)

Verse 14 above tells you that one major key to answered prayers is to obtain the hearing of God or to secure divine audience. This verse also tells you that it is only the prayer that is prayed according to the will of God that God hears. What this means is

that God does not hear any prayer that is not according to His will. Verse 15 says, “If we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petition that we desire.”

The opposite will also be true: if we don't know that He hears us in whatsoever we ask, we don't know that we have the petition that we have desired. That means once you are sure that God has heard you, then you are sure that He has answered your prayers, that is, the prayers that are answerable are prayers that God will hear in the first place. What makes a prayer answerable is also what makes it ‘honourable’ and that is the will of God. That tells us that prayers have laws that govern them. We shall be looking later at some of the laws that govern the subject of prayer. I believe that as you read along, you will become a prayer champion, victorious in prayer and not just a prayer warrior, and you will become a master at praying personally and receiving answers.

You should also note that prayer is not the same as begging. Asking is prayer, but begging is not prayer, and complaining is also not prayer.

Let's look at what praying entails:

Praying means reminding God of His promises.

Praying means listening to the Holy Spirit's instructions.

Praying includes thanking God that He has already done what you are asking Him for.

Praying includes asking as you desire.

Praying includes casting your care of the answer on God.

Praying includes speaking out your answer.

What is Complaining in Prayer?

Now, complaining, which is what most people do, includes the following:

1. Describing the Problem to God

If you find yourself describing the problem, you are not getting through to God—you are not praying; you are simply complaining.

2. Repeating in Prayer What the Devil Has Said

Maybe the devil has told you that the pain in your

body is cancer, and you go to God in prayer to utter it—you are complaining, not praying. Praying includes listening to the Holy Spirit, not the devil. Praying is reminding God of His promises, not repeating to God what the devil has said about the problem.

3. Putting Your Opinions to God

“God, this is what I think about this thing, this is what I feel.” God does not care about what you think about it, but what He has said about the matter!

If God has said something concerning any matter or any issue of life, it’s your responsibility to find out from the Word of God what He has said. This is one of the reasons why God has set Pastors, anointed of the Holy Spirit, in the church, to teach people how to apply the Word of God to their everyday situation. It is the duty of every human being to find a shepherd, who is called, anointed, and ordained of God, to guide their lives and teach them the principles and ways of God.

If you don’t have a pastor who is born again, anointed of God, Holy Ghost-led, teaching the Bible, practicing the Word of God, believing that God is a

prayer-answering God, and getting answers to prayers, you will be in trouble, because we need answers to prayers to get over many crises and negative situations that we face in this world.

4. Wondering Why God Has Not Yet Answered

Have you ever found yourself wondering why God has not answered your prayer? Or asking Him why He has not done one thing or the other?

Sometimes you cry like this and you don't know that you are complaining. Remember, there is no complaint bureau in heaven. Prayer is thanking God that He has already done it; you come to Him according to the law, the laid-down principles and procedure, having the assurance that He has heard you. Complaining starts when people are not sure. They are not sure because they have not come according to the laid-down principles. You don't know God or relate with God by your feeling or by your circumstance. You know God and relate with God by His Word. Once you have prayed according to His will, He has heard and answered, and divine processes have been set in motion. As you thank God, your answer will manifest after a while.

5. Praying Generalised Prayer

Bartimaeus prayed thus: “Lord, have mercy on me.” This is a generalised prayer. You must be specific in praying. The Master asked him, “What do you want me to do for you? What are you asking for?”

6. Using Vain Repetitions

Some people believe that unless they pray and repeat what they are saying, they are not praying. That is not praying—that is complaining.

7. Praying the Same Matter All Over Again

If you have really prayed when you prayed once and you are sure that God has heard you, thank Him the rest of the time until the manifestation of the answer comes.

8. Trying to Pester God to Change His Mind

Many people believe that if a man (or woman) doesn't pester and disturb God, He won't change His mind and give him (or her) what he (or she) is asking for. That's very wrong. They have that idea because that's the way we all grew up.

You know when you were young and you wanted

something from Daddy, you would disturb him up to the point that he just gave you that thing just to 'get rid of you'. That's the way many people deal with God. They have the mentality that when they disturb God enough, He will give them what they want just to 'get rid of them'. No, that's not praying; God doesn't want that. If you've been praying as I've described so far, you've not really been praying; you've been complaining, and God doesn't like complaining. He wants you to ask Him in faith, believing He has done it.

Chapter 2

Dangers of Complaining in Prayer

MOST PEOPLE DON'T even know that they are actually complaining, but knowing that will free you from that problem. This is because prayer brings power into your life, but complaining brings problems into your life; hence, you must stop complaining. Many people don't know that complaining in the place of prayers or supposed prayers opens their lives to the devil's assault. God wants you to know the truth.

And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord, and the Lord heard it and his anger was kindled and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

And the people cried unto Moses and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched

And he called the name of the place Taberah; because the fire of the Lord burnt among them. (Num. 11: 1-3)

Now, look at these three verses. They tell us a lot about the dangers of complaining.

Eight Dangers of Complaining in Prayer

1. Complaining Displeases God

Since it displeases God, it means it is not of faith because the Bible says in the book of Hebrews,

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

So when a man does not believe that God is, or walks in the reality of the truth that God is and that He is a rewarder of people who diligently seek Him, he will begin to complain. Most people inadvertently, ignorantly, innocently, and sincerely are complaining and thinking that they are really praying.

2. Complaining Destroys Faith

Job complained and he was overwhelmed. The children of Israel complained, displeased God, and it destroyed their faith. Complaining destroys your ability to believe God further. It incapacitates a man

from believing God. Imagine a woman praying about an issue that the concerns of her family and she begins to wonder and says, “God why have you not answered my prayer?”

What she’s saying in prayers is destroying her faith, and she wonders why she can’t get that prayer answered. It is because she has moved from praying into complaining or she was never praying in the first place. Many people spend their whole life in prayer actually complaining and God doesn’t want that because it displeases Him. It doesn’t display faith in God and that you believe God. It doesn’t show that God is good. It’s so important that you understand that prayer is reminding God of His promises, prayer is listening to the Holy Spirit, prayer is thanking God for the answer to prayer, and prayer is expecting the result and speaking the answer.

3. Complaining Stirs Up the Anger of God

Complaining kindles God’s anger like a fire against a man instead of the favour of God. God wants to favour you—His child—but when you begin to complain, it stirs up the anger of God. When God is displeased, His anger is stirred up. That’s what happened to the children of Israel. When they stirred

up His anger, the fire of the Lord burnt and consumed them. Destruction began to take place. Don't let God answer you in His displeasure. When the children of Israel pestered God for a king in the days of Saul, the Bible says He gave them a king in His anger, and He took the king away in His anger.

Also, when the children of Israel cried and yielded to their lust, God gave them food that wasn't His plan for them, and while they were eating the food, the Bible says destruction began to happen to them (Ps. 78). Don't complain, rather rejoice.

4. Complaining Sows the Problem Into Your Heart As a Seed

The words of your mouth are the seeds that you are sowing into your heart, and whatever finds its way into your heart will be reproduced in your life. If you begin to complain in the place of prayer, you are sowing seeds into your heart. What you do in prayer is planting seeds into your heart, and those seeds will manifest in your life. Don't complain. Complaining will sow the problem into your heart, and the problem now becomes the fruit that manifests in your life. You wonder why somebody prays and instead of the problem reducing, it begins to increase.

This is because that person has been sowing the problem as a seed in his heart through complaints in the place of prayer.

5. Complaining Looses the Problem and Demons Instead of Angels

The words of your mouth will bind angels or bind demons; you will either loose angels to work for you or loose demons to work against you. When you start complaining, ‘Oh God, why have you not answered my prayers?’, ‘God, why have you not done this?’ and things like that, you are releasing demons to begin to work, and causing that problem to continue. Don’t ever say such things. Don’t ever permit yourself to complain in the presence of God because God is eternally good. God has never failed anybody, and He is not going to start with you. It’s time for you to believe that God has heard your prayer if you asked according to the will of God and begin to thank Him for it. For He’s faithful who promised and He will do it (Heb. 10: 23). Thank God for the angels; they are the ones who work to create answers to our prayers in the physical world, and they can do what no man can do! When you begin to thank God, angels will begin to work for you, but

when you begin to complain, demons will begin to work against you.

6. Complaining Magnifies the Problem

It multiplies it in your own imagination and in your mind. The problem becomes like a mountain, and the faith of the person diminishes until it is as small as a tiny shrivelled seed. On the contrary, when you begin to thank God, He is magnified. The Bible says, “Magnify the Lord with your words”.

How do you magnify God? Does it mean God can get bigger? No, God is as big as He ever would be, but when you begin to magnify Him, He looks bigger to you. He looks bigger than your situation, and your faith begins to rise. Your faith is as big and as strong as you see God big and strong inside you. However, when you begin to complain, the problem is magnified such that a small problem begins to look big and assumes gigantic proportions in your life and in your thinking until you give up.

Look at the children of Israel in Numbers, Chapter 13. They began to complain saying there were giants in the land, and they (themselves) were like grasshoppers in their own sight and so they were in

the sight of the giants. They could not enter the Promised Land because they complained. This was a magnified problem. However, look at Caleb and Joshua—the same situation, the same giants; the two of them said, ‘We are well able’—they did not complain. To Caleb and Joshua, God was bigger than the giants, but to the other people who complained, the giants were bigger than their God. If you complain, it makes your problem bigger than God, but when you begin to thank God, it makes God bigger than your problems; and before you know it, the problem will have disappeared.

7. Complaining Brings Further Confusion

When a man begins to complain in prayer, he gets more confused: ‘Does God really answer prayers? Maybe it’s not for me, maybe it’s for that person.’ Such a person begins to get out of the light of the Word of God into the darkness of human opinions, philosophical sayings, unbelief, and all sorts of lies of the devil that wraps a man up in the spirit of confusion to the point that he may not even know his name any more! I mean there are people who pray themselves into confusion. They don’t know when they start saying that God has failed them and

doesn't love them any more which is not correct.

For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Mal. 3: 6)

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. (Heb. 13: 8)

If He answered the prayer of somebody yesterday, there's nothing like He's not going to do the same for you because the Bible says God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10: 34). For God to do something for somebody in the Bible and be unwilling to do it for you today (if you do what that person did) is to say that God has respect of persons, but He doesn't have respect of persons.

In the book of Job, Job said he would fill his mouth with arguments complain. He did and what happened? He couldn't find God; he said he turned to the right, He was not there, He turned to the left, He was not there and the problem began to enlarge until God began to correct Job. We need to learn how to pray correctly and not enter into complaints.

8. Complaining Will Fertilise the Problem

God doesn't want you to fertilise your problems. Complaint is the fertiliser of the problems in the lives

of some people, while thanksgiving is the fertiliser of answers to problems in the lives of others. After you have prayed, then begin to thank God. The objective of the teaching in this book is to help you discover the principles that govern not only prayers, but answered prayers. There's a difference between prayer and answered prayers. We want to see the laws that govern answered prayers because according to 1 John 5: 14, If God can hear your prayer, and then he has answered that prayer (author's paraphrase).

You don't need any further proof that your prayer is answered other than the proof that God has heard it, and the only way you can know that God has heard it is if you prayed according to the will of God.

Chapter 3

What Jesus Said About Prayer

I want to take you into the four gospels—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and look at what the Lord Jesus Christ said concerning the subject of prayer. I want to examine principles from these passages to help you in your prayer life. The Bible is the best guidebook on the subject of prayer. You don't pray according to your opinion or tradition. Everybody prays as we have established, but not all prayers are answered.

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.
(Luke 11: 1)

It is interesting to note that there was no place where they ever asked Jesus to teach them how to preach, but they asked Him to teach them how to pray. This is because they saw that the secret of the power in the life of Jesus was His prayer life, and they saw that Jesus had a very effective, powerful, and

productive prayer life. Many people pray, but there's not much in their prayer life to write home about. This is not supposed to be so because God actually wants us to pray and to have results. So they asked Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray even as John taught his disciples to pray' and in answer to that prayer, the Lord gave them what has become known in the church world today as 'The Lord's Prayer'.

The Lord's Prayer is not a prayer to recite; it is a pattern and a principle of prayer, which many people have turned into a prayer to recite. They recite it, but they are still defeated because that prayer was not just given to be recited like a magical incantation. No. It contains principles for powerful and effective prayer. When they asked Him to teach them how to pray, He responded with principles of prayer.

And he said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (Luke 11: 2-4)

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. (Matt. 6: 8-9)

Take note that He said ‘After this manner’ and He didn’t say ‘This is what to use.’ He said, ‘After this manner pray ye’:

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

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen. (Matt. 6: 9-13)

Don’t forget that I said it is a pattern to guide prayer, not a form to repeat. When you turn it into prayer itself, you will just be involved in vain repetition. Now what are the principles in this passage?

The Principles of Effective Effectual

Prayer

1. True Prayer Is Based on Relationship

The first thing Jesus said is that when you pray, say, ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’ True prayer is based on a relationship. He is our Father, and we are His children. One of the clearest ways to prove that somebody is a child of God is that he has answers to prayers. That is one of the ways that God distinguishes a Christian from every other person—that he prays to heaven and he receives definite and direct answers to his prayers.

The first principle is that true prayer is based on a relationship with the living God. Do you have a relationship with God? I don’t mean whether you believe in God in a general sense or in an intellectual sense, but have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? In John 14: 6, Jesus states in no ambiguous way the only way to have a relationship like this with God:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14: 6)

The only way to have God as your Father is to come through Jesus Christ. There is no other way to make

God your Father. He said, 'No one gets to the Father, but by me.' You can know Him as God, which is a general title, but to know Him as Father you have to come through Jesus. That's what He's saying here, and to have answered prayer, it can only come when you have relationship with Him as Father. He answers prayers because He's our Father not because you have a need per se. The Bible even says your Father knows you have need of those things before you ask Him. It's not just because of needs that He answers prayers, but because just as an earthly father feels for his children, God wants to help His children and bless them. But in this case, He has rules that govern answered prayers. The first thing you have to do is to establish a living relationship with God, and the only way you can do that is to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life.

If you don't have a living relationship with God yet, you can pray at this point and invite Jesus into your heart now. Just tell Him, 'Lord Jesus, I open my heart to you. I want you to be my Lord and Saviour from today. I turn away from sin and from the devil, and I welcome you into my heart now. Thank you for doing it.' If you prayed that simple prayer and meant it in your heart, you've just entered into a

relationship with God—a living relationship. That's the first principle of prayer: prayer is based on a relationship, coming to God in prayer on the basis of a living relationship with Him.

Do you know there's no secretary in heaven? When you go to the office of an executive, you may be asked to stay in the waiting room; but thank God, there is no waiting room in heaven. You can just walk in as a son or a daughter to your Father, and He will respond to you and welcome you. Your coming to Him is His own high point of the day. You are not tolerated in His presence; you are celebrated in His presence because of the blood of Jesus that has washed you. That's the first principle of an effective and effectual prayer which is based on a relationship.

2. Worship

Now, let's go on to the second step. He said, 'Hallowed be thy name.' We must learn to honour, worship, and adore our God. He warned His people in the Old Testament not to take His name in vain. Now, it is not only that you honour the name of the Lord or hallow the name of the Lord or sanctify the name of the Lord only in the time of prayer, but it must be part and parcel of your life. You can't use

the name of God in vain throughout the day and come to church on Sunday and begin to play sanctimonious religiosity with the name of God and think you are hallowing His name. No. That's what many people do, and that's why they don't even get answers to prayers.

Many people just pray to soothe their conscience. Listen, beloved, prayer is more than soothing your conscience. Prayer is a two-way communication with the living God by a living human being in a covenant of living relationship with Him that affects and changes things in your life's situations and circumstances. Don't form the habit of praying to soothe your conscience or just pray as a religious duty. No. Let there be true worship, true adoration, and true honour for the name of the Lord.

3. God's Way of Doing Right

The third point in that passage says 'Thy kingdom come.' What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is God's way of doing and being right. Let me put it like this: God's way of praying, and praying right. That's part of the kingdom, and it has come now. Jesus said, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' What does that mean? Repent, for God's

way of doing and being right is now at hand. The kingdom has come.

The Bible says that since the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and forceful men are violently taking their portion (Matt. 11: 12). That means, since the day of John the Baptist, the kingdom of God is being proclaimed. God's way of doing and being right is being proclaimed, and men are forcefully pressing into it, taking their share of what the kingdom has to offer; you too can take your share now.

In this book, I'm showing you God's way of praying right so that you can take your share of the blessings of prayer and your own portion of the benefits of praying correctly, and not just praying endlessly without getting an answer.

4. The Will of God

The fourth point in the Lord's Prayer which gives us the fourth principle is 'Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.' This tells us one thing which is one of the basic reasons why we pray. We pray to enforce the will of God on the earth as in heaven. The will of God in heaven is clear and settled. There

is no challenge and no contrary opinion to the will of God in heaven, but on the earth, because of the fall of Adam and the subsequent transfer of the legal authority God gave man on earth to the devil, man has to pray and know how to pray in order to have the will of God done in his life.

If you don't know how to pray effectively, the will of the devil will be done in your life and affairs. That's why many people are in trouble today; but through prayer, we can change many things on the earth. Look at the qualification of that prayer. It says 'as in heaven.' Now what is the will of God in heaven? Let's talk of the will of God for health and sickness. Is there sickness in heaven? Certainly not, and that immediately tells you that it is not the will of God for sickness to be in the life of anybody on the earth. We can pray and deal with that subject of sickness through prayer. Is there poverty in heaven? Not at all. Looking through the Bible and every description of heaven, there is no trace of poverty in heaven, and if we are praying 'Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth,' then we must not allow poverty in our lives for any reason.

Prayer can be used to deal with any subject in your

life. What's the will of God for your children and for your family? Peace, orderliness, comfort, well-being, soundness, love, and joy, but that's not what many people have. That's how God wants it in heaven, and that's how it is in heaven. But that is not what many people have in their lives. Concerning every area of your life, you need to find out first what the will of God is in heaven concerning this. That is what must be on the earth. The earth should be a reflection of the will of God in heaven on any subject. It's not your opinion, it's not the tradition of men, it's not the way people say it is, but the will of God in heaven that must be done on the earth.

It's amazing how somebody can be reading the Lord's Prayer everyday and allow what is not the will of God in heaven to bear rule in his own house and say he's holy, he's religious, and that he's a child of God. That's wrong. Prayer is one of the means by which we change whatsoever is not the will of God on the earth, where we are living now to reflect and line up with the will of God in heaven. There is a heavenly standard in the presence of God concerning every area of our lives as we are living on earth. In heaven, there's a blueprint, and prayer is a means of making every area of your life agree with the

blueprint in heaven. For example, the will of God for a student who is a child of God is to succeed well in his or her studies. His will for you is to be above —‘Thou shall be above only and not beneath, thou shall be the head and not the tail’—as a student. If anything is contrary to that, you can take the principles of prayer and apply them to your studies, academics, preparations, exams and everything and change every contrary experience until it is like God’s will in heaven.

How do we get the will of God in heaven done on the earth? Since He says ‘as in heaven’, do we have to go to heaven? No, we don’t have to go to heaven. The will of God is now given to us in the Bible. Whatever you see in the Bible is the will of God and that is exactly what God wants in heaven. That is exactly what God has in heaven and that is what is duplicated in the Bible. Now take your Bible, if you find anything in your life that does not line up with the Bible picture, then cancel it in prayer. That’s what it means to pray ‘Thy will be done.’ It’s a prayer of power, it’s a prayer of authority, and it’s a prayer of warfare.

The devil is the one who is messing things up on the

earth! If you study the book of Job, you will see a vivid demonstration of the difference between the work of God and the work of the devil. You will see that all the atrocities, afflictions, and problems that Job went through were the devil's operations though he went through natural causes that people will have natural explanation for. Haven't you heard that when there's an earthquake, people call it the act of God? Insurance companies also call it that, and it is a slight on God because God doesn't cause earthquakes. It's the devil that does it. When there is a fire disaster, people call it an act of God. It's not an act of God, but an act of the devil; you should identify the real culprit and deal with him, because if you think it's an act of God, you will be fighting the wrong person; you cannot fight God and win, you cannot resist God but James 4: 6 says, 'Resist the devil and he shall flee from you.'

Sickness is an act of the devil; it is not an act of God. God doesn't teach you anything with sickness. Therefore, when He says 'Thy will be done,' it includes your spirit, your soul, your body, your family, your finances, and your affairs. Every aspect of your life should be a reflection of the will of God, that is, if you are a child of God, the totality of your

life should be the will of God in motion. Just like Jesus said ‘He that has seen me has seen the Father,’ you can as well say that he that has seen you has seen the will of God. The will of God is not for you to be sick or poor, wearing tattered clothes and not having enough to eat and care for your legitimate responsibilities. The will of God can never be that. Somebody else is trying to impose his negative will on you, and whenever you have those things in your life and through the instrumentality of prayer, you can resist it and enforce and establish the will of God in your own case.

What is the will of God? The Word of God is the will of God for you. Don’t forget that. **MAKE THIS CONFESSION:** *The Word of God is the will of God for me. When I have the Word of God, I know the will of God and I’m going to have the will of God established in my life. I’m not going to say ‘Amen’ to what the devil is doing any more from today, so help me God. Amen.*

5. Unforgiving

The fifth point that we see in the subject of the Lord’s Prayer is in the book of Luke: ‘And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is

indebted to us.’ This point shows us that the only hindrance to effective prayers that the Lord Jesus mentioned is the subject of being unforgiving.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt. 6: 12-15)

Now, if God does not forgive you your trespasses, certainly your prayers cannot be answered. Many people today are ‘prayer-failures’ because they are so much unforgiving; a lot of families are weak in prayer for the same reason. When you are weak in prayer, you are weak in the power of God. When you are weak in the power of God, the devil is strong in your life and strong against you because there are so many offences in your life. (I have dealt extensively with the problem of being unforgiving in my book titled *The Danger of Offences*. You can get a copy of the book; it will be a blessing to you. It will show you the dangers of offences and being unforgiving).

You need to get rid of the unforgiving attitude. It's a great hindrance to the fulfilment of destiny for any man on the surface of the earth.

The only hindrance to an effective prayer life is being unforgiving, and that means it is the greatest hindrance to effective prayer. If you want to have an effective prayer life, then forgive others. Let me recommend an effective way of walking in forgiveness—practice forgiving people before they offend you. How do you do that? When you wake up in the morning, just say something like this: 'Father, I forgive anybody that will offend me today.' This is before they even offend you because offences will come. Men will be men, and the devil will be the devil, and you cannot control how somebody will relate with you, but you can control how you are going to react. You can choose right from the beginning that you are going to react right. You can choose right from the beginning that you are going to respond in forgiveness and love towards anybody who offends you, because if you carry offences in your heart, it destroys your prayer power. In fact, it shuts you up from the audience of God. It keeps you out of the hearing of God, and once God can't hear your prayer, your prayer cannot get any answer.

6. Resist the Devil

Lastly, Jesus said, ‘Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil’ (Luke 11: 4). God wants us to pray about the direct work of the devil. Temptation and evil are the works of the devil, so do not neglect the devil; cast out his works.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4: 7b)

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1 Peter 5: 8-9)

This is what the Lord’s Prayer is all about, and they are components of effective prayer. We shall consider other things that Jesus said on prayers in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4

Learning About Prayer from Jesus

REMEMBER THAT THERE'S a huge difference between praying and begging and praying and complaining. Most people don't know when they have stopped praying and started complaining, especially when the answer seems not to have come on time; some people don't know they are not praying and that all they are doing is just begging.

In this chapter, we will learn from what Jesus said about prayer because He's our perfect example about anything we want to find out on how to live successfully in a relationship with God.

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.
(Matt. 6: 5-8)

Now, in these four verses, we have some very important things that we can learn about prayers:

1. You Should Pray the Mind of God

Prayer is not a question of *if* you pray, but *when* you pray; therefore, you should pray. Every man who is going to be successful needs to pray. You must believe in the efficacy of prayers. Notice that prayer actually does not change the mind of God—it only changes the circumstances of man.

You must have heard this statement: prayer changes things. Yes, prayer does change things, but what does it change? Is it the mind of God or your circumstance? Many people pray with this mind: *If I pray hard enough I will change the mind of God. If I pester God enough, I will change the mind of God.* No, you can't change the mind of God. The Bible says God is not a man that He should repent. To

repent means to change His mind. God does not change His mind. Why do people pray with that kind of mentality? They never know the mind of God before they start praying.

One of the keys to effective and successful praying is to first of all find out what is the mind of God before you start praying because it will just be a fruitless exercise, praying against the will of God, against the mind of God, or trying to change it. God does not grow in knowledge nor does He improve. God does not get wiser—He is perfect, and He is the only person who is perfect in the universe. So His will is perfect; He doesn't need improvement. He does not need to change His mind whatsoever.

So Jesus said there, 'And when thou prayest.' That means you should pray, and not only know when you should pray, but you should know how to pray, and that's important. Most people pray, but their prayers are not answered, and my focus is to bring you to a place of prayer power that not only will you become a prayer warrior, but you can do your own praying and get answers for yourself and be a blessing to other people.

2. Don't Pray As Hypocrites Do!

He said, ‘Thou shall not be as the hypocrites are.’ Who is a hypocrite? A hypocrite is somebody who is a two-faced person. He says one thing but believes another thing in his heart. He puts up an appearance like somebody wearing a mask. He has two faces: the face that the mask shows is not his real face, but in this context of prayer, a hypocrite is a man who does not believe in prayer itself, but does it to please people so that people can think that he is close to God. It is a form of religious deception. Jesus gave the example of the Pharisees and the Sadducees of his day as an example of the hypocrites.

What do hypocrites do? He said we shouldn’t be as the hypocrites are in prayer, and he gave us an example of what they do in prayer that is wrong; you must never do that if you want answers to prayers.

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. (Matt. 6:5)

Here Jesus is not condemning the posture of prayer or the place of prayer, which is the corner of the street, but their motive to be seen by men and to be hailed and praised as somebody who could pray.

Jesus said that that's all the reward they were going to get—the praise and the applause of men. Prayer is a two-way communication between a man and his God for fellowship and for changing situations and circumstances that require divine intervention and divine involvement; you can't afford to be praying for ostentation so that people can see you. That is what Jesus was saying here: don't pray to be seen. Don't pray to be seen by men; people who do so will limit their reward to the applause of men.

Now, this is another problem that many people have with verse 5 of Matthew, Chapter 6. There are people today who believe that everybody who is praying standing in the synagogue or public place of worship and praying in the corners of the street is a Pharisee, so they say, 'Well, my prayer is just between me and my God. I'm praying silently in my heart.' That is not what Jesus is saying here. He is not teaching silent prayer. He's not teaching us to pray in our bedroom alone; He is only dealing with the motives of the hearts of the people.

If you have to pray in the public, go ahead and do it. It takes boldness to pray in public. Imagine you are going somewhere and somebody just falls down

fainting beside you. Will you say that since Jesus said we shouldn't pray at the corners of the streets, you won't pray and bind the devil in the situation? Many times Jesus Himself prayed in public. In John, Chapter 11, verses 41-42, Jesus prayed at the tomb of Lazarus that was in public. He said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me.' But a lot of times, He went away so as to avoid the distractions of people. So don't misunderstand that truth.

Some people will say, 'These Pentecostals disturb us with their noise.' No, that's not noise when you are praying standing or praying in the corners of the street. Understand that Jesus was dealing with the motives of the heart. Your motives in prayer must be correct, holy, and honourable, and it must be to worship God, to honour Him, and to interact with Him. It must never be to show off. Anything that you do between you and God is never a matter between you and another person. This includes giving offerings in church. Giving an offering is not a matter between you and another person. Don't say that because somebody gave some amount of offering, you have to increase what you give. No, it is always an exclusive matter between you and God.

It's the same with prayer—you don't pray because somebody else is praying, you don't pray because somebody is looking at you, and you don't pray because you want to impress somebody about your prayer skills. No. You don't pray so that people will think you are close to God; some people do that—people who won't come to church throughout the year but will get to church on 31 December and pray desperately. You know, that's what He's saying here. That is hypocrisy because that person does not believe in the efficacy of prayer; he doesn't recognise God throughout the year, but just remembers God on 31 December until the dawn breaks on 1 January of every year, just to fulfil his or her religious obligation.

For some, it's only during the Lenten period that they fast and pray. Throughout the year they don't reckon with God; they carry on with their lives. But at this period, they have a temporary suspension of their normal activities just to put up a religious appearance. That's what Jesus is dealing with here. Lent is not just for one period of the year—it's supposed to be a continuous exercise of your heart's relationship with God all through life. You must not be a hypocrite when you are praying. Don't pray for show; don't pray to be seen by men.

3. Enter Into Your Closet

Matthew 6: 6 says, ‘But thou, when thou prayest . . .’ Remember that phrase *when thou prayest*—Jesus was saying this is what you do when you are praying. That is, these are rules that you should apply, principles that should govern your prayer time. This should be part and parcel of your prayer. If these details are absent, you are not likely to get an answer in prayer.

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. (Matt. 6:6)

Now, verse 6 is compared with verse 5 where He described a hypocrite. Now, He’s describing a child of God coming to the Father—what can we learn from here? He said, ‘Enter into thy closet.’ What is the closet itself? The closet is a chamber on the ground floor in some oriental houses used for privacy or for storing things, that is, it is a place where you can be alone and pour out your heart without fear of somebody eavesdropping or disturbing and distracting you. Therefore, in the practice of prayer, your closet will be a place or a time that you are free

from the distractions of life, and you can have privacy with your God and your Father to interact, discuss, and share your heart with Him and hear what He has to say to you without anything or anyone restraining you.

Have you ever been in a church service where the man of God says, God is telling him that everybody should ask three requests, and whatever they ask, He will hear them? You know what people will do? They will turn away from every other person and say things they don't want any other person to hear, that is, many times when we are praying where other people are, we may be saying things that we don't really mean—things that we want to say to impress people; but prayer is never for the sake of impressing another person.

When you pray to impress other people, you've just wasted your time—you've got your reward according to what Jesus said in verse 5. But now He says, 'Go into your closet'—mean business with God, pouring out your heart in privacy or intimacy with God. Your closet can be a place or a period in time. In the life of Jesus, look at what He did to practice this truth:

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

Jesus went to a place where He could have a closet-kind of environment, where he could have privacy; even there the people sought Him, and when they found Him, they said to Him, ‘All men are looking for you.’ That’s why many people don’t pray and don’t succeed in praying.

Let me tell you an important principle: when you wake up in the morning, you can change your location—get up from the bed. Many people don’t successfully pray because they wake up from the bed and stay on the same bed to pray. You know what usually happens? You fall back asleep and wake up two hours later. Your body doesn’t want you to pray, and the devil also doesn’t want you to pray; if the two of them gang up against your desire to pray, they will cancel it, and you will find out that you oversleep and you are now only ready for work. That’s what Jesus meant when He said the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. What this means is that *it takes more than a willing spirit to pray—it takes a conquered flesh to pray.*

Jesus got up early in the morning; maybe it was during the winter. Though it was cold, He had to get up and relocate; He got to a place that was lonely and solitary so that He could have a closet-kind of environment. If your home atmosphere is not conducive for this kind of prayer in the morning, there could be another time. It could be another time in the evening or it could be an all-night. In the life of Jesus Christ, you will find out that many times He prayed in the middle of the night or all night long. Luke 5: 16 says, 'And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.'

'Enter into your closet' means withdrawing from distractions, relationships, interactions with people, situations, and circumstances and going to pray. You have to withdraw from the problem you want to pray about so that it doesn't destabilise you by staring you in the face; go to your God, just unburden your heart, and pray to Him, and God will hear in the secret. It does not necessarily mean you have to go into a closet like a toilet, although you could do that. However, you must learn the principle that sometimes the closet is a time when you are alone. Some people have a home atmosphere that is not possible to have this kind of a fellowship with God in the morning.

Some people have a situation at home that it is only in the evening when the children are out playing or the husband has not come back from work that they can be free from distractions. They can have that time as their closet time and maximise it.

You should know the devil will always attack your closet time. He will focus on the time that you need privacy with God. But at other times, when people are with you, he leaves you alone. And then there are times the Holy Spirit comes to stir you up to pray—you need to withdraw from people at such times. Many times, to get a closet-kind of environment, you have to excuse yourself from human presence. Just say ‘Please excuse me, I just want to spend the next ten minutes with God,’ then go somewhere! When you begin to practice that courageously, people will respect you for it, and you’ll discover that you begin to become more powerful in prayer.

One of the reasons why people are not powerful in prayer is because they are men-pleasers at the expense of God. It takes courage to pray because the devil will always attack you and bring around you people whom you can hardly turn down; and, of course, you don’t want to look like somebody from

heaven—a ‘not-on-the-earth’ human being. If you are fond of saying ‘I’m praying’ every time people come to see you, then you will hardly have any friends. You can find the time to have the closet kind of environment. It can be found, it can be available, like Jesus did, early in the morning. He didn’t offend anybody because they had not woken up. He woke up earlier than the others. But to do that, He had to conquer His flesh to get a closet where He could pray. Pray to your Father in secret, and He will reward you openly with miracles, signs, and wonders. You need to conquer your flesh. Many people cooperate with their flesh, and have so many failures in prayers. But God wants you to be a prayer champion, a powerful person in prayer; you need to look at this principle of discovering when the best time is or how to have a closet.

4. Shut Your Door

Matthew 6:6 continues with Jesus saying, ‘When thou hast shut thy door . . .’

This means closet yourself away from every problem, and from your emotion that wants to distract you. It is possible for you to say ‘I’m going to spend this set time praying to God and dealing

with this particular matter with my Father in heaven' and suddenly you just hear that a friend has come to visit you. What do you do? Do you leave your prayer to answer your friend, or do you tell your friend to wait for you? That's what 'shutting thy door' means. You can open your door to a visitor or other distractions or you can open your door to God. But you can shut your door and say, 'Not now, I have a business with God at this time' and shut the door on every other thing, and then you get blessed.

I remember there was a particular day that a member of our church came to see me for counsel and they told this particular person that I had been praying and I had been there for a number of hours. Before I finished, she had left. The person wrote me and said, 'Pastor, I came to see you, and you didn't come out.' I said, 'Well, I was receiving from the presence of God what makes me your pastor. I can't leave the presence of God because if I am a human being like you, I can't be a blessing to anybody, but with the anointing of God upon my life, I can be a blessing to you.'

I had to shut my door like that. My emotion would have wanted to see that person. You know everybody

wants to be in the good books of people, but in order to fulfil destiny and to be powerful in prayer, you will need to make a choice to please God at the expense of people, and not please men at the expense of God. That's what it means to 'shut thy door', 'to pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly'. Take a look at these words: 'secret' and 'openly'. What that means is that when you are paying the price for power, when you are paying the price for success with God, nobody sees you. That's contrary to the Pharisee who does his own praying openly to be seen by men. You do your own praying to be seen by God, and the reward is what men will see. The rewards include answers to prayers, a home that is peaceful, a ministry that is powerful, the anointing of God, having signs and wonders as was in the life of Jesus.

Many times, Jesus withdrew Himself (as we read before) and prayed all night long, and in the day you would see directions of the Holy Spirit in His life; He would bring the word of knowledge and the power of God, and people would wonder at those miracles. You know the anointing flowed so much in His body that people touched His clothes and saw miracles.

People wondered, *Oh, what kind of man is this?* But when He was paying the price secretly, nobody saw Him. But people saw the open reward; everybody wanted it, and you can have that too. It takes a decision; it takes determination and conquering tendencies of your flesh, like weakness and lack of prayer, to get to that place and to walk in the power of prayer.

5. Avoid Vain Repetitions

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

You know there are three categories of people that the Lord Jesus is speaking to here in Matthew 6: 5-15, on the subject of prayers:

1. The disciples
2. The Pharisees and hypocrites in prayer
3. The heathen

The heathen is somebody who doesn't believe in God but prays too; he prays to all kinds of gods. Look at the three categories. He corrected the disciples on things not to do in prayer. Some people had been

doing it and they thought they were praying, but they were not heard. You know, there are many things that we practice in prayer that we got from the traditions of men, our society, the elders, and churches, which are not biblical. People regularly follow these traditions. Some people say, ‘Well, that’s how our church does it.’ But is that what the Bible says? I want you to be biblical and not churchy. We must first be biblical before we are churchy because if you are churchy without being biblical, you’ll miss the blessing of God.

Jesus said to the disciples in verse 5 that the hypocrites pray to show off, but we shouldn’t be like that. Then He said that the heathen pray using vain repetitions. What did He mean by vain repetitions? Vain repetition is like incantation—just chanting, saying the same religious words over and over again. Prayer is not a magical act nor is it a ritualistic performance; rather, it is an interaction between an intelligent being (man) and an intelligent God who made him. It is a relationship between you and your God.

In the previous chapter, looking at the Lord’s Prayer, I emphasised that prayer is first a relationship

between you and God. Without a relationship between you and God, you are not involved in prayer. You may be involved in the exercise of religion, but there's a relationship with God that gives birth to real biblical prayer. Imagine your son coming and saying, 'Mummy, bread, bread, bread, bread, bread, bread, bread.' You'll think something is wrong with the boy; that's exactly how some people pray, thinking that they will be heard for their many words. It's not the volume of the prayer that determines the efficacy of the prayer.

When you look at the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, His public praying was very brief with very few words. He just spoke a few sentences to heaven, and mighty things happened. Mighty things happened because He did a lot of praying in the secret. When you pray in the secret, it should not be just voluminous repetition of the same words. This is not what brings answers to prayers. That's what He's saying here in the passage. He said, ' . . . for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.' What makes you to be heard is found in 1 John 5: 14:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, (*Who are the 'we' referring to? The disciples*) that, if we ask any

thing according to his will, he heareth us: (1 John 5: 14)

They thought they would be heard for their many words. Many people have this idea: *Well, I want to change the mind of God. If I pester God long enough, if I disturb Him long enough, He will answer me to get rid of me.* You know that was how our fathers treated us when we were growing up. When you pestered your daddy enough, He just gave you what you were asking for to get you out of his sight so that you would not keep disturbing his peace. But that's not like God; don't carry that into your relationship with God. It grieves the heart of God because God wants fellowship with you; He wants an interaction with you—an intelligent one.

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5: 15)

What causes God to hear us? Is it speaking more and using many words? No. God hears us when we ask according to His will. The statement 'prayer changes things' must be qualified. It is a statement that is so popular; but what exactly does prayer change? Prayer does not change the *mind of God* rather it changes the *circumstances of man*; it is correct

prayer that changes the circumstances of man. It is not just the act of praying that changes the circumstances of man; it is the faith that the man is exercising in the power and the willingness of God that brings the power of God to change the circumstance.

The verse above says that what causes God to hear you is praying according to His will. One thing that you must learn is to find out the will of God first, and the only place to find out about the will of God is to get into the Bible. There is not going to be any effective prayer without your Bible close by. God won't hear just because you are crying and shedding tears. It may be hard, but this is the truth. God is compassionate, but He has written His word, and He cannot violate His words, His principles, and His laws. He's so merciful that He has given us an advanced copy of His will and His word to know what He is going to answer before we start praying. You must recognise that the will of God and the willingness of man must not clash. The willingness of man includes your own prayer and efforts, but the will of God cannot be violated by that. That's what Jesus is teaching us in verse 7.

Let's look at the good example of some people that were involved in this kind of 'much speaking' in the Bible. This is the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel:

And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. (1 Kings 18: 26-29)

These people made a lot of noise, thinking that they will be heard for their 'much speaking', but do you notice they didn't get any answer? Jesus is telling us that that's how the heathen pray, and He asked His disciples not to pray like that. Find out the will of God; pray specifically according to the will of God,

simply with a childlike faith in God, and you will get an answer.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. (Eccles. 5: 1)

What's the sacrifice of fools? Talking repeatedly and irreverently. It is praying to fulfil all righteousness. Don't pray for the sake of praying; you don't just speak anyhow in the presence of God.

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. (Eccles. 5: 2)

That's what the Lord says. These are principles to practice when you pray. These are things that should govern you when you pray. They are rules of prayers that the Master taught us. He said in the book of Matthew,

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (Matt. 6: 8)

Matthew, Chapter 6, verse 8 should just set your heart at rest: 'Your Father knoweth what you have need of before you ask him,' but He still wants you

to ask Him. That is what prayer is all about. Ask Him, and He will tell you what He is prepared to do, what He is committed to do concerning the needs you will face on the earth from the time you came out of the womb to the time you will go into the tomb if the rapture delays before you go home. But He says here, ‘Be not like them, for your Father knoweth . . .’ Your responsibility is thus to find out what He has said He’s going to do about it. He knows that a sick person has a need for healing, but how is the sick person going to ask Him? He will need to read 1 Peter, Chapter 2, verse 24, which says, ‘ . . . by the stripes of Jesus you have been healed’ and remind God by taking that to Him.

God says, ‘Put me in remembrance’ (Isa. 43: 26). This does not mean God has forgotten, but He says prayer is a legal contract between Him and us, established on the blood of Jesus and based on the relationship that we have with Him. ‘Put me in remembrance; bring my word back to Me’—this is because there is a devil that wants to hinder you and attack you and tell you that you are not qualified to get what you are asking God for. But when you have the contract in the Bible, the devil cannot stop your prayers from being answered. God is asking you to

ask so as to cause the devil not to be able to stop you because the devil is a wicked person who wants to come and say, ‘No, you don’t deserve that.’

Many people are weak in prayers because the devil tells them, ‘Oh, you sinned ten years ago. It is not people like you that the blessing is for’ and things like that. Almost every time you want to get something from God, the devil will come up with some questions and confusions. That is why you need to know the will of God, to know that God answers your prayers based on relationship, based on you coming the right way, approaching him in the name of Jesus, approaching him with His will, and He cannot refuse you as a child of God. It is not based on speaking much. If you ask some people as to how they know that God answered their prayers, they will say ‘I prayed for three hours’. That is not a basis to believe that you are getting an answer.

It is like a candidate coming out of WASC* Examination and saying ‘WASC is in trouble this year,’ and that year he fails all the subjects he sat for. If you ask him what happened, he would say, ‘Oh, they gave me F9 parallel.’ No, *they* didn’t give you, *you* got it. There is a syllabus with which you should

prepare for the WASC Examination, and if your answers don't tally with those in the syllabus, you can't pass. That's why many students fail WASC Examinations and wonder why they keep failing. Also, many people fail the exams of life in prayer and wonder why they keep failing. It is because they don't ever refer to the syllabus of prayer, the Bible, in order to find out what God has said He is going to answer, what God has said they should deal with by their authority in the name of Jesus, and what the Bible says someone else can pray for them about.

*** WASC is an acronym of West Africa School Certificate.**

Chapter 5

Jesus and the Principles of Prayer

IF ANYBODY KNOWS about prayer, Jesus does, and we can learn many things from Him to apply in our own prayer lives so that we can leave the valley of defeat and move to the mountaintop of victories, joy, and answered prayers in our walk with God. One of the things that make the Christian life fulfilling, worthwhile, meaningful, and exciting is that you know that you can get answers from heaven to your prayers. It encourages you to continue walking with God, going through anything. It gives you a sense of confidence. It gives you a sense of assurance knowing that no matter what the devil does, you have a master key. The key to get the ear of God is the key of prayer, correct praying, and successful praying, and I believe that God is delivering that key into your hands through this book in Jesus's name.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it.

And when even was come, he went out of the city.

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. (Mark 11: 12-14, 19-20)

Now, this was the second time they were passing that fig tree. When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem the previous day, He saw that fig tree and spoke to it, but then, nothing physically happened to that fig tree at that time. They went to Jerusalem and came back in the evening, and they still saw the fig tree. The following morning, when they were coming back to Jerusalem, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots (implying the third time they were seeing the fig tree).

And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. (Mark 11:21-22)

Notice that in verse 14, when Jesus spoke to the fig

tree and nothing happened to it, the Bible says ‘And his disciples heard it’. But this time around when Peter called into remembrance the fig tree, Jesus answering, said unto them, ‘Have faith in God’. What exactly was happening here? Almost everything that happened in the life of Jesus and His interactions with the disciples was used to teach them one salient principle of the kingdom or the other. He did not allow any situation to go without turning it into a teaching to impart the truth of the kingdom, and He was about to do the same here.

Jesus did not just go around destroying the vegetation or cursing trees; rather, He was going to use this incident to teach them something. He was hungry and wanted to have His needs met, but the fig tree did not respond to Him. Now, you can take verses 12-14 and see that sometimes you have a need in your life and you think this is going to respond to it but nothing happens. What did Jesus do in response to the fig tree? Jesus spoke to it, which means the fig tree must also have spoken to him. The fig tree spoke back to Jesus, saying, ‘There’s no food here for you.’ Similarly, your circumstance is always speaking to you; many things are speaking to you. They are voices, and you hear those voices every time. For

example, if you are driving your car and the fuel indicator reads ‘empty’, your likely response will be to stop over at the nearest filling station. The fuel tank of your car has spoken to you, and you responded by driving into the petrol station to fill your tank.

The fig tree that didn’t have any fruit on it spoke to Jesus, and Jesus answered it. The same way, conditions that are negative in your life are speaking to you, and you must answer them in return and say something to them to change those circumstances; otherwise, they will continue speaking to you, and overrun your life. That’s one lesson you can learn from this story. Now let’s go to verse 23 and see the prayer dimension of this incident.

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. (Mark 11: 23)

Take a look at the next statement Jesus made, which was a product of the preceding verses (22 and 23):

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

Many times when we go to pray, it is because we have a situation in our lives that we want to change from negative to positive and the situation is like the mountain that Jesus spoke about: ‘Whosoever shall say unto this mountain’ (the situation is also like the fig tree that Jesus spoke to). He said, ‘Therefore I say unto you’, that is, the principle that He just demonstrated for them in His interaction with that fig tree, which He further explained: ‘Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea and shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass he shall have whatsoever he saith.’ Jesus was saying that this principle which He had just stated would work in prayer.

This same principle is what you apply when you pray to change things from negative to positive. What is the principle? *The principle of speaking to the mountain, the principle of not doubting in your heart, the principle of believing that those things which you are saying in prayer shall come to pass, and the principle of having whatsoever you say.* That’s why you must know what you say in prayer because what you say in prayer will come to pass. That’s what I was dealing with in the previous

chapter, the differences between praying and complaining. When somebody begins to say, 'Oh God, why are you not answering my prayer?' He's saying something in prayer and he's going to have that thing; therefore, you have got to be careful. Jesus continued saying,

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

The principle here is to believe that you receive what you desire in prayer. Don't pray what you don't desire. What do you desire in your situation when you pray? Do you desire a change? All right, then, that's what you pray. What He's telling us is that prayer is not describing the problem to God. Prayer is speaking to the problem to change. Most people describe their problems to God: 'God, don't you see what I'm going through?' Somebody even said, 'Lord, if you know what I'm going through, you wouldn't be sitting down like that on the throne.' God will not panic because you are going through a difficult situation. He has the power; He can change your difficult situation, but you must know how to get Him involved.

Prayer is getting God involved to change things from negative to positive; therefore, learn the principles here. Praying is not describing the problem or the mountain to God. He didn't say 'whosoever shall *describe* this mountain', but 'whosoever shall *say* unto this mountain'—apply the principle of addressing your problem to change in prayer. For example, if you are praying about a sickness, "Father I just thank you because this sickness is healed and destroyed by the blood of Jesus. 'By the stripes of Jesus, I'm healed'." You are quoting the Word of God in prayer to God and to the problem. You are reminding God that this is what He has said. You are securing His involvement and asking God to confirm His word—"I'm standing on Your word"; you are declaring the Word of God to the condition and circumstance and saying you have got to change and bow to the Word of God.

God already sees the mountain, so don't describe it to Him anymore. He said that we should say thus: 'Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea.' Say precisely what you want to happen and not what is happening. You want to pray because something is happening that you don't want, so don't repeat that same thing again while praying; you will only

establish it when you repeat it. Your word is the establishing power in your life and not the circumstance. The circumstance may have happened, that's a fact, but what you say in prayer will determine whether the circumstance will continue or it will change for the better.

Jesus was saying here that the principle in verses 22 and 23, which He applied was to speak to the fig tree. He didn't allow the fig tree to have the last say; He spoke to it. The same way, He said you should do the same in praying, that is,

1. Don't describe the problem
2. Speak to the problem
3. Don't doubt in your heart
4. Believe that those things you are saying in prayers shall come to pass
5. Believe that you are receiving them as you are praying there and then, and you shall have them, that is, the manifestation of the answer.

That is the principle that the Lord Jesus Christ is sharing with us on the subject of prayer, adding faith to prayer. The summary of what He said here is that

for prayer to be effective, it must be offered in faith. Just offering prayer in fear and panic is not going to change the situation. Offering prayer in faith, having trust and confidence in God's power, and willingness to get involved to change the negative situation is what gets the result. Jesus spoke to the fig tree; He didn't doubt that it was going to come to pass. Even when nothing physically changed, He didn't doubt, and that is another thing you've got to know. Stop considering the physical circumstances after you've finished praying.

In verses 15 to 19, they passed by the fig tree again and saw the fig tree still standing full of green leaves and nothing happening to it. Jesus did not even talk about the fig tree again. As far as He was concerned, the fig tree died in the morning when He spoke to it. Similarly, as far as you are concerned, the problem was solved when you discussed it with God. This is because 1 John 5: 14 says that if you are sure that God heard you, then you are sure you already have the answer, and you should stop relating with the problem as if it isn't a reality any more. From the minute you pray correctly, the problem loses all reality. What you see now is a virtual problem; it is an illusion of the devil. Don't let the devil use an illusion

to defeat you.

The Bible talks of the shadow of death. Death has lost its reality; it is the shadow that remains now. Jesus has taken the reality and the sting out of it. When you pray, that problem has lost its reality; it is now a shadow of its old self. Don't let the shadow defeat you. Nobody's shadow can beat you, so don't let the shadow of the problem defeat you. Jesus was looking at that fig tree as a shadow now, and in the morning they saw the manifestation of the prayer of faith of Jesus. You too will see the manifestation of answered prayers as you learn to apply these principles. In verses 25 and 26, He dealt with the subject of forgiveness, which we've already dealt with in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6

Submitting to the Will of God in Prayer

FROM THE PREVIOUS chapters, we've been learning from the Master Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, about prayer, and I believe that these principles we have seen in His teachings so far are helping you to be the kind of person in prayer that God wants you to be—a prayer champion. There are many prayer warriors, but a few prayer champions. I pray that you shall become a prayer champion in Jesus' name.

In this chapter, we shall focus on Matthew, Chapter 26 from verse 36. This is about the last prayer time that the Lord Jesus had on the surface of the earth, and He shared some very powerful truths in this prayer that we can learn from.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (Matt. 26: 36-38)

Two Instructions

Notice the two instructions Jesus gave to His disciples. To the rest of the disciples He said, ‘Sit here while I go and pray.’ To the three, He said, ‘Tarry ye here and watch with me.’ *In our relationships with God, there are levels of responsibility and revelations.* The dealing of God with our lives and in our lives is determined by the responsibilities that He commits to us and to our care. The Bible says, ‘To whom much is given, much is required.’ It is not to every believer or every person that the Lord can say ‘Watch with me.’ There are some people to whom He will say, ‘You tarry here while I go and pray yonder.’ He didn’t even require them not to sleep or to pray. But for those He wanted to play a crucial role in the drama that was about to unfold (the greatest battle that heaven and hell had ever fought over the human race was about being fought at that time); he required the three of them to

tarry and watch with Him.

I want you to know that you can build up your life and your walk with God to the point that God can make you a deciding factor in your city, your nation, your country, your generation, your church, and in your family. You can be the deciding factor by virtue of a well-developed, sound and solid spiritual walk with God.

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

God's Will or Your Will?

Now, this is where the will of man must bow to the will of God. There is the sovereignty of God that overrules the efforts of a man.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (Rom. 9: 16)

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. (Gen. 6: 3)

That tells you two things:

1. The Spirit of God will strive with a man concerning the will of God for his life.
2. The Spirit of God will not *always* strive.

There comes a time in the life of a person that when the Holy Spirit has struggled with a person long enough, and the person says, 'No, I don't want to do the will of God', then the Holy Ghost agrees and accepts defeat in the person's life and leaves the person to have his way. When a man wins over the Holy Spirit, he will lose to the devil in life. When a man loses to the Holy Spirit in the secret, he will win over the devil in the public.

I wrote a book, which covers that truth, titled *Lose To Win Or Win To Lose, The Choice Is Yours*. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated for us here: 'Not as I will, but as you will.' That is the thing that gave man the greatest victory over the devil's mission. Are you having your way over the will of God? If yes, that's the surest way to defeat. There are people today who promote their will, their interest, and their desires above the will of God for them, and they lose very terribly in life.

In prayer, you will confront this choice when God brings His will for your life to you. Some people have been struggling with God over the issue of being born-again. ‘I don’t believe in that. I don’t want to join those religious fanatics.’ How long do you want the Spirit of God to keep striving with you, beloved? This is another chance that you are getting that God is striving with you, and He wants you to be born again if you are not yet born again. You know there are people with whom God strives, and He knows they don’t have much time any more to have their way because there’s a devil waiting out there to destroy them, and God keeps coming to them. Don’t win over the Holy Spirit. Don’t win over the will of God, you will only lose out eventually. Lose to win and win to lose—the choice is yours. Lose to God in the secret and win wonderfully in life. You will win wonderfully over the devil when you lose to God, but if you win over God in the secret, you will lose terribly to the devil.

Maybe God has been striving with you to be born again or to come into the full-time ministry; to some He may have said, ‘This is the husband I chose for you to marry,’ or ‘This is the career I want you to pursue,’ or ‘This is the place I want you to stay.’ You

know, some people are not blessed in the city they are living because they don't want to stay there. The Bible says, 'If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land' (Isa. 1: 19).

If you are not willingly staying where you are, you will not get the good of that place. There are people who are not getting the good of marriage because they are not willingly married to their wives or husbands. Some others are not getting the good of their careers because they are not willingly working there; they are not willing in their obedience. It doesn't take a long time to get willing and say, 'Lord, I will submit to your will. You want me here for now, and I agree with you. I surrender to you. You want me to be doing this or going through this now, I submit to your will.'

The will of God you're submitting to here today is not referring to sickness. This is the will of God as regards to purpose and direction. There's no crown without a cross. The cross is not a wooden cross or pendant dangling on people's chest. Blessed be God, Jesus is no more on the cross! The cross is the will of God that crosses a man's will. Where the will of God crosses your own will, that's when you carry

the cross, and if there is no mark of the cross in your life, you are a weak Christian. Every powerful Christian carries the mark of the cross. Paul said, 'From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of Christ' (Gal. 6: 17). He said, 'But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6: 14). That's when you are loosed from every hindrance, and you begin to flow in the will of God and the power of God.

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? (Matt. 26: 40)

The disciples failed him. They didn't join him in prayer. He needed the prayer support of people, and there are times that you also need prayer support of people. Sometimes some people don't receive the prayer support of other people because of pride. Listen to me, the devil likes a proud man because he is a weak person, but a humble person does not find it difficult to say 'Join me to pray.' You may be the boss or you may be the pastor, but it is not wrong to get prayer support from people. Also, you may be the husband, but it's not wrong for you to ask your wife

or children to stand with you to pray. Jesus asked His disciples to watch with Him and pray with Him for one hour.

I believe there's something about praying for one hour. If you can just discipline yourself to praying one hour every day, it is going to bring more power into your life than you can ever dream of. You know, it is more difficult to pray for one hour consistently everyday of the year than to pray seven hours at a go once in a blue moon, and that is what many people do. They don't pray for many days and they just pray long prayers once a week—that is why they are so weak.

Chapter 7

Conquering the Flesh

REMEMBER, WE ARE looking at the last prayer that Jesus prayed while He was on the earth here with a view to learning from the Master Himself how to be a prayer champion. He still prays in heaven today, but we are going to look at that aspect of His ministry later. For now, we are looking at the last earthly prayer that He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. We have learnt some few things about prayer in this passage in Matthew, Chapter 26 from verses 36 to 46. Two lessons that I have pointed out and stressed are as follows:

1. You must learn to submit to the will of God in the place of prayer.
2. You must learn not to be proud in prayer; request for the help of other people to stand with you in some situations and circumstances, especially when you are overwhelmed in your heart and the pressure is so much that you need

prayer support. So request for it and receive it.

Jesus, our Lord, asked His disciples to pray with Him and to stand with Him, but they failed Him. We have to learn what caused them to fail Him because we are also disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we learn what caused them to fail Him, then we will not fail the Lord nor fail the people who depend on our prayer life for their own survival. Understand it today that many people depend on your prayer life for their own survival.

If you are a father, for example, your children and family depends on your prayer power to survive. If you are a mother, your children depend on your prayer life to succeed. As a pastor, your church depends on your prayer power and your prayer life to succeed. If you are an intercessor, there are people whom God has assigned you to pray for, and they need you praying effectively.

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? (Matt. 26: 40)

Now, we learn here that one hour is not talking of sixty minutes alone in the literal sense, but it is also talking of a period of prayer. I believe there's

something about praying one hour. Spending one hour and disciplining yourself to praying one hour consistently on a daily basis strengthens your heart.

The Hour of Prayer versus the Hour of Trial

The Bible talks about the hour of prayer in Acts, Chapter 3—*if you can keep the hour of prayer, God will keep you from the hour of trial*. There's the hour of trial that comes upon people in the world. The hour of trial came upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and He needed prayer at that time. Do you know why many trials overtake people and overturn their lives? They did not have an hour of prayer with God before that trial came, so it caught them unawares. But in the place of prayer, if you keep your hour of prayer with God, it will keep you from the hour of trial.

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

The word 'temptation' speaks of trial.

Pre-emptive Prayer

Now what is the Lord saying here for us to learn? Watch and pray. There is a prayer that I call pre-emptive prayer. It's the kind of prayer that you pray, having watched in the spirit, being led of the Holy Spirit to pray in advance before trial comes. The implication from what the Lord Jesus Christ is saying here is that if you don't watch and pray, you will enter into trials. Trials don't come from God; God knows what the devil is planning and what he wants to bring across the path of His people, and He gives us advance information. The Lord says it like this in John, Chapter 16:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16: 13)

Part of the things to come that He will show you are the trials that the devil is planning to bring against you. In this particular passage, the devil was planning to take Peter and the rest of the disciples through a trial of betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ, but because they didn't keep the hour of prayer, that trial caught them unawares, overturned them, and they all backslid before the Lord went after them after he rose from the dead and gathered them back again.

Why People Don't Keep Their Hour of Prayer

One of the things that caused them not to keep their hour of prayer, and which still causes many people not to keep their hour of prayer is what the Lord said, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' This means you need more than a willing spirit to win in life, to pray successfully, or to pray at all. You need more than a willing spirit to obey God. To do anything tangible and successful in life, you need a conquered flesh. It is easy for anybody to allow things to continue normally and naturally. It is easy to raise wayward children than to raise well-disciplined children because it takes an effort, it takes a price to do anything tangible. Everybody in life will naturally go on the easy road, but the champions are the ones who have decided to go on the road of destiny, even though it is rough and tough.

The price is that they've conquered the flesh. The flesh does not want you to pray. If you don't conquer the flesh, you won't even fast and you won't pray at all. You will just wake up and begin to talk, the flesh wanting to interact with people from the time you wake up in the morning until the time

you sleep in the night. But if you are going to pray and spend time with God, you will have to discipline your flesh, conquer your flesh, subdue your flesh, and then pray. Paul puts it like this:

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. (1 Cor. 9: 24-25)

To be temperate means to be self-controlled. That's what sportsmen and athletes do to win a corruptible crown or prize. He's saying that as Christians, we must be temperate to win an incorruptible crown because there's a crown at the end of this race.

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (1 Cor. 9: 26-27)

It is the flesh that causes people to backslide. If Apostle Paul, as mighty as he was in the Holy Ghost, needed to keep his body under the control of the Holy Spirit continuously in order not to be a castaway, don't you think you and I have to do much more? If

the Lord Jesus Christ needed to subdue His flesh in order to win, pray, and be successful and fulfil His own destiny, don't you think you and I have to do much more? *Anybody can wish, but the man who is going to win in life must have more than a wishbone—he must have a backbone.* It takes a backbone to conquer your flesh. It takes more than a willing spirit. Anybody can admire, saying, 'Oh, he's a mighty man of God! I love that man of God. I love the way he prays. He prays three hours every day, he prays five hours. Oh, I love it! I just admire that.'

It takes more than just admiring to have a prayer life. You've just got to roll up your sleeves, roll up your trousers, and get into the nitty-gritty of praying, and discipline your flesh to do it. When you wake up in the morning (supposing the Holy Spirit wakes you up at 5 a.m.), get up from the bed, go somewhere, and begin to pray, pray, pray, pray, and pray. You don't know how to pray until you start praying, and you won't pray until you start praying and keep praying and continue praying until you know how to pray and until it becomes a habit with you. Then you become dangerous to the devil.

Many people have lost great battles because they

failed to watch and pray. Even when God does His own part to warn you in advance before the devil comes, the habit that you have cultivated—whether the habit of laziness or habit of discipline—will determine whether or not you will pray to avert a crisis or a trial. Many people have cultivated very negative habits that even when an attack is coming against their family or their children, and God wakes them up to begin to pray at 2 a.m., they just keep on sleeping until the enemy comes and people wonder whether God failed them. God does not fail anybody, and He's not going to start with you. Watch and pray and learn to discipline your flesh. The Lord said, 'The flesh is weak.' Don't use that as an excuse—conquer your flesh!

It is often said that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link; the weak link in the make-up of a man is the flesh. Your spirit man, if you're born again, is like Jesus. Your mind, if renewed, is going to think after the Word of God, but your flesh is still your flesh. Put it under, continuously, until we meet Jesus face to face, and you will not be defeated in Jesus' name.

Learn to conquer your flesh. Put it under. Just tell

your flesh, 'I am in charge and not this flesh. I don't eat when my body tells me it is hungry, but I eat when I want to feed my body. I don't sleep when my body tells me it's sleepy, but I sleep when I'm ready.' That's the way to win; to put your flesh under. I don't read the Bible when my flesh tells me to; you know, your flesh doesn't want you to read the Bible. It prefers to read the newspaper in the morning to reading the Bible. But you choose to read the Bible. Don't say, 'Well, I feel sleepy when I'm reading the Bible.' Open your eyes, bind the devil, and subjugate the flesh, and you will be a champion in praying and in life in Jesus' name.

Chapter 8

Persistence in Prayer

THERE ARE THREE kinds of experiences that you see in the Bible and in our lives as Christians:

1. Ideal Experience

The first kind of experience is the ideal experience that Jesus alone personified. He's our standard. No human being is our standard; it's Jesus who is our standard, and He personifies the ideal of a man who never had a problem with prayers. He never had a problem with faith, love, hearing the voice of God, or any aspect of the Word of God and the will of God, and never had any problem with dealing with the devil and victory. He was never defeated.

2. Exceptional Experience

The second kind of experience is the exceptional experience. This is the experience of ministers of the gospel because of the calling of God upon their lives. They go through and experience some outstanding

things that is due to the presence of the Holy Ghost upon their lives and the calling and the assignment that God has given them, not necessarily due to their faith, piety, or holiness. For example, because God has called somebody and specially anointed him, much of revival may be breaking out through his life and he stands out uniquely; this is because of divine choice and nobody has any right to query a divine choice. But that does not mean that that man is better than any other person. God has just chosen him for His own reasons and for His purpose. That's an exceptional testimony. It will be wrong for somebody to say, 'Oh, I believe that God is no respecter of persons, because He did that for that person, He's going to do the same for me.'

God has a specific relationship with each and every one of us. Some people are called to preach prosperity and God blesses them mightily in that area. Some people are called to preach healing and God gives them outstanding testimonies of personal deliverance from sickness and outstanding demonstrations of His power in those areas of their lives because of the call and the assignment of God upon their lives, they have exceptional testimonies.

Occasionally, in the church you may hear someone say, ‘Oh, I obeyed God immediately and this happened to me’ or ‘An angel came to me’ or ‘I heard the audible voice of God.’ Those are exceptional testimonies, and you have no right to say you want something like that. Many people have asked God for exceptional testimonies, not knowing that it’s the exception and not the rule and they fell into the deception of counterfeit spirits that entertained their curiosity and exploited their ignorance. For example, the book of Acts did not happen in one day nor did it happen in one week. Jesus gave us a pattern of what the New Testament church is to experience and what it is to be like. It is not every day that an outstanding spectacular demonstration took place. Most of the time in the Acts of the Apostles, we see that they were experiencing the normal supernatural participation of the Holy Spirit, learning how to hear the voice of God and being led by the Spirit of God though they had exceptional testimonies too.

3. Normal Experience

The third kind of experience is the normal experience that everybody is expected to go through. Not

everybody will be called into the five-fold office of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, and pastor. But there's an experience that everybody is supposed to go through. For example, if you hear somebody saying, 'From the day I got born again, I've had the spirit of prayer. I never had a problem with praying. I wake up, I pray seven hours daily.' How do you feel? Some people hear that and feel, 'Well, maybe I'm a backslider.' No, you are not. That is an exceptional testimony, and if you look at the life of that person very well, maybe God has called him to be an intercessor, and you should not use another person's experience with God to rate yourself.

That does not mean you don't improve. God allows you to improve at your own pace just like a father does. It's a foolish father who rates all his children at the level of his first-born. The first-born may be older than the rest and he's more experienced. You can't use a fifteen-year-old boy to rate a five-month-old baby. The same is with God. In the subject of prayer that we are dealing with, we are learning from the Master who demonstrated exceptional experience and the ideal experience that we are supposed to go after.

The Principle of Importunity

Let's see again what we can learn from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ about prayer:

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11: 5-13)

Now, obviously, this parable that He gave in the first part and the explanation that He gave in the latter part show us that He's teaching some key principles about prayers. The major principle that He's trying to give to us is the principle of persistence or importunity. Many people have misunderstood this particular passage to mean that you just stand there and keep asking until God is fed up and then gives you what you desire just to get rid of you. That's not what He's saying.

Remember, He said, 'There's a relationship.' You see, prayer is always based on a relationship. It's a communication between two people in a relationship. He is using the relationship between two friends to typify and exemplify prayer between God and His children. You know, our relationship with God is superior to that of a friend to another friend. We are sons and daughters of a father. God is our Father. That's what He's saying, and you see, there are things that you will demand of your friend that you won't demand of your son. There are things that you do for your son just because he's your son.

God answers prayers because we are in a relationship with Him. He relates with us in power because of a

relationship. But that relationship is governed by certain principles, which are the principles that I am bringing out so that you can come to a place where your prayer life is very effective and very powerful. The principle Jesus explained in this passage is the principle of importunity.

A friend going to another friend at midnight with a request for three loaves is talking of an awkward need. It doesn't matter what time you have a need—pray about it first. You have a covenant Partner, you have a covenant Father, and you have a covenant relationship with God. Don't start roaming around first and then pray later. This place is telling us not to use hard work to replace prayer. Prayer has its own role and hard work has its own role; the two can't replace each other. Many people think that prayer makes you lazy or that if you are lazy, you can turn it into prayer. Many people work hard, but the devil scatters their work because they don't recognise the prayer factor. Prayer recognises that without God you are sunk.

This man recognised that he had a friend. He knew that he had to give to his friend. This is telling us as believers that our prayer lives should be developed to

a point that it becomes a blessing to people around us. This man had a friend who came in the middle of the night in need and hunger, and he had made up his mind that he must set something before his friend, the responsibility of friendship placed that on him. *What* to eat is not the issue now, but *how* to find it. He's acting under the pressure of relationship to look for something to give his friend and that is like us. People around us need our prayer lives, and we should be able to take their needs, requests, and problems to our God and get help for them to meet their needs. Your family, friends, boss, workers, and employer, as the case may be, need your prayer life. As an employee, your employer needs your prayer life for that place to keep functioning so that your salary can keep coming. As a pastor, the church members need your prayer life, and as a member of your church, your pastor needs your prayer life so that the anointing can keep flowing. All of us need to develop our prayer lives with God. Prayer is with God. It is a covenant relationship.

The man in the passage we've just read went with his request to a friend, not a stranger or a neighbour. He didn't go to an acquaintance, but a friend, and you must know that prayer is going to a covenant

Father, a covenant Partner, and a covenant Friend; the Bible calls Jesus our friend. It is important that you understand that you have a basis to come—that's the first lesson we must learn.

Our Big Friend Always Has

If you look at this passage again, you'll see that there are three personalities there:

- a. The friend who had just arrived,
- b. The friend whom he arrived to meet, and
- c. The bigger friend whom the friend, who had nothing to give, went to meet.

Now, I want you to look at this big Friend. There is something I want you to learn about God here. This big Friend always has stock. It doesn't matter what time you come at midnight, He has loaves of bread ready. The friend whose friend who just arrived didn't have anything to present. Now, your prayer life is what you have to be a blessing to people. Your relationship with God is what you have to be a blessing to people. Before I go further, I want to ask you this: do you have a relationship with Jesus? Do you have a relationship with God through Jesus

Christ? Are you born again? This is different from going to church. Going to church is not the same thing as having a relationship with God. Being religious is not the same thing as having a relationship with God. I'm talking of a living relationship, like a father and son.

Did you come to the realisation one day that you were a sinner, and without being born again, without Jesus, you couldn't save yourself and you wanted an end to that and you prayed a prayer to welcome Jesus into your heart or life personally and practically? Not that you claim to be 'born a Christian' or that you claim to be a Christian because you were born through Christian parents. No, I am talking about you willingly entering into a covenant relationship with Jesus at a point in your life.

If you have never done that, I would like you to do that right now before you continue reading this book by asking Jesus to come into your heart and establish this relationship. You need Jesus in your life as your Saviour and Lord. Remember, the big Friend always has, and thank God our Covenant Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ always has. You can never exhaust His resources. There's no need that can confront you—

either yours or that of the people who depend on you—that you can take to God and He will say to you, ‘Where did you get this from?’ He’s more than enough. Even if the thing is not available, He can create it. That’s the difference God makes in our lives.

The Power of Divine Connection

You may not have money or earthly connections, but with a heavenly divine connection, you have everything in place. There are people today who are so connected to big people in the society. Thank God for that, but if knowing a big man in a powerful position or office can make a difference in a man’s life, how much more difference will knowing the God of heaven, the Maker of heaven and earth, who also is the Owner and the Possessor of everything and everyone, make? Do you know the difference it will make? I mean, if somebody knows the head of the government of a particular nation intimately, anybody wanting to do something in that nation only needs to meet that person, and he can always have his way through. That’s the same picture being shown in this passage that because you know the God of the universe, people who have needs can

come to you. That's what happened in the life of Jesus. They came to Him, and He connected them to God, and they received miracles. That's what pastors are in your life for. That's what ministers of the gospel and church are for. That's what you are supposed to be in your environment as a believer—a connecting link to the God of heaven for men.

Having learnt that our big Friend, our Covenant Friend, and our Father always has, look at what Jesus said in verse 13:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7: 11)

He has good gifts. The Bible says, 'Every good gift and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of light.' He always has. You can't overburden Him or come with too much. You can't say, 'Well, I don't want to disturb God at this unholy hour of the night.' You know, there are people who feel so—'I can't be praying about something as small as my children's school fees' or 'I can't be praying and

disturbing God with something as small as my transport fare, or about how I'm going to get to my office today' or 'I can't be praying and disturbing God like that.' No, that's exactly what Jesus was correcting here that coming at midnight hour is an awkward hour, but that friend is always there. He will respond from within, and he will have what you need. This man knew that this big friend always had and that's why he came to him. You must know that God always has what you need.

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

You must believe two things when you go to God:

1. He's there; always there and always willing.
2. He's a Rewarder; He will give you what you are asking from Him if you come the proper way, diligently seeking Him. This is what this man is doing here, diligently seeking him.

Locus Standi

The other thing you can learn there is that you must have a *locus standi* to come to your friend. You see,

he didn't say, 'Somebody that I didn't know has just appeared,' but he said, 'A friend of mine in his journey has come.' Many times, people came to Jesus as a result of their relationship with another person. This is what is called *locus standi* in law. The centurion in Matthew, Chapter 8 came because of his servant; he had a relationship with him, and on that basis, he went to Jesus.

The Syrophenician woman in Mark, Chapter 7 came on behalf of her daughter; Jairus came because of his daughter, and Peter came to Jesus because of his mother-in-law. There's always a relationship, and that's important. Many people find themselves alone in their hour of crisis because they have no relationship with someone who knows God. That's why in Acts 4: 23, the Bible says when they threatened Peter and John, 'they went to their own company.' I can't over-emphasise that you need to have a company of people associated with you whom you are in fellowship and partnership or membership with, who believe God, who know how to get the hearing of God, and who know how to pray effective prayers and receive answers in your hour of need. Everyone faces crisis, but thank God that those of us who are born again and belong to Bible-believing,

Bible-practicing churches know people who can join us to pray the prayer of faith and the prayer that can change things in the hour of need. Many people don't have that, so are alone in their hour of crisis and their hour of darkness. They struggle in the midst of confusion and sorrow, and the devil defeats them.

Some will say, 'Well, what do I have to do with that Pentecostal church or that gospel church?' or 'I don't want to have anything to do with them.' This goes beyond church; the name of the church is not the issue, but the people you are in partnership with. You must have a company. Some people say, 'I have a church,' but he has not been in that church for the past twenty-five years. He doesn't have anything to do there. He just has a name on the register there. It is not just walking in any company, or any group of people; it must be a group of people who can really get the hearing of God. That's what this place is telling us.

Mothers should develop their walk with God in order to be a blessing to their children, and fathers should develop their walk with God to be a blessing to their children and grandchildren. You never can tell who is related to you that your prayer power will be his or

her saving grace in a night of darkness. That's like this man. The friend came on his journey in the middle of the night, but he had somebody to go to, and thank God, there was a solution. Let's go to verse 7-8:

And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. (Luke 11: 7-8)

What the Lord is revealing to us here is that God is not saying, 'I can't do this for you now.' He's rather highlighting the principles of persistence, the persistence of the friend which is not the persistence of asking, but the persistence of waiting to receive, the persistence of expecting. He has asked and identified himself, 'Oh, it's me, I need this, I need that, and I'm waiting outside there.' The friend, by his waiting and expectation, knew that he was putting pressure on the loyalty, integrity, and compassion of the bigger friend inside; he was also putting pressure on his commitment to their relationship and his kind nature. That got the man up even at that unholy hour.

He didn't say, 'Oh, its cold', but because his friend was out there, he got up. Jesus used that to typify the God who is infinitely good. Look at what He said in verse 13:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11: 13)

He was saying here that if human beings, who are capable of being evil, can give good gifts unto their children, then how much more can God, our heavenly Father, who cannot do evil, who is infinitely good and His mercies endures forever, do for us? He has always loved you with an everlasting love, even when you didn't love Him. When you hated Him, He sent Jesus to die for you on the cross.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:32)

That's what He was saying here. It is to encourage you to persist and say, 'Father, I just thank You because You are doing it for me. I thank You because You are going to get me that thing.' Your child will do exactly that; he tells you he needs something and stays there, and you know you just have to do it.

Jesus is encouraging us to come up; He's not saying 'ask and keep asking' committing the sin of repetitious prayer that I have dealt with—He's just talking of asking and waiting. Wait in faith, put pressure on the faithfulness of God, on the loyalty of God, His promise, His kindness, and His compassion. Yes, believing that God who promised is faithful to do it and He will do it.

Chapter 9

Praying With the Correct Mentality

NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT prayer more than our Lord Jesus Christ, and whatever He says or has to say about the subject, we do well for ourselves and our sojourners on the earth to consider it and apply it to our prayer lives for effectiveness in prayer just as Jesus was. It's possible because He's our example. The Bible will not call Him our example if it's not possible to be like Him or at least get close to Him. Jesus said it is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and He is our teacher; if He says that, it means it is possible for us to get that close. Let's look again at Luke, Chapter 11, verse 11-13:

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto

your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

In the three verses of the scriptures above, remember that Jesus is teaching us principles of prayer; these are things that He practiced in prayer. These are factors that inform His mentality when He went into the place of prayer.

Come to God As a Son

Many people go into the place of prayer with a wrong mentality. They have the mentality of a God who is perfect and who is waiting for them to make a mistake and judge them, a God who cannot be touched with the feeling of the infirmities of a human being, an impersonal God that nobody can have a relationship with. But Jesus came to show us a completely different picture of God. He's talking of a father-son relationship. He's talking in this passage of a son going into the prayer closet with the mentality of a son, not the mentality of a housemaid. If you have a housemaid in your house, there is a difference between how your housemaid approaches you to get something and how your own child approaches you for the same thing. Imagine, in the house there's a bowl of ice-cream in the refrigerator, which both

your son and your housemaid want. The housemaid comes with a feeling of fear, inferiority, and intimidation; she's not sure whether she has that liberty or privilege, but your son just walks up to you saying, 'Mummy, I saw a bowl of ice-cream in the fridge, and I want to take it.' He just informs you; he's asking with a measure of confidence knowing he's getting it. That's the mentality of a son.

What Jesus is saying to us here is that when we go into prayer, we should go with the mentality of a son relating with a loving father. He deliberately compared the father nature of God with the father nature of a man. If you are truly a father, there is a measure of compassion that flows in you towards your children—you just want to do some things for them. You love having them around, you enjoy their presence, you love them, and you do some things for them even when they don't know they need them, but your own eyes as a father sees the need and you plan to meet the need. The same way but in an infinitely greater measure, our heavenly Father has us in His mind.

The Bible says in Psalm 8: 4, 'What is man that you are mindful of him?' That your mind is full of him.

But despite that fact, many people are still ‘prayer failures’ and have problem with praying because they do not go into the place of prayer with a mentality that is correct towards God. They think of God as a God who they must just appease. You know, in the African culture, there are all kinds of idols that people have to appease—angry and wicked gods that must be appeased and begged. God isn’t like that; the God of heaven is not like that at all—He’s your Father!

It is important that you understand that you don’t go to the prayer closet like an idol worshipper goes to his idol to appease a god that is angry. God is our Father whom we should approach with the confidence of a son, with the mentality of a son going to his father; it’s as simple as that. But many times, a lot of parents are not raising their kids properly in showing them a good impression and a good understanding of true fathering. So the child has to plead with the father and just pester the father until the father just says, ‘Okay, just go away, don’t disturb me.’ As a result, when the person becomes born again, he carries that mentality into his relationship with God, thinking he has to pester God until God is tired of him and just gives him what he’s asking for just to get rid of him. No, God doesn’t do

that. He enjoys having you around. If you are a real good father, you know how you feel when your children come in, or when you've just come back from a trip, you bought things for them and hug them when they come around you.

That's exactly what Jesus was teaching here: if earthly fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more the heavenly Father. Note that He didn't say 'Heavenly God' but 'Heavenly Father.' 'God' is a title while 'Father' is about a relationship—a father is a person. Just like when we were in the secondary school in those days, the principal of the school was chief executive of the school, the fear of all the students, at least those of us who were not his children. When any student heard that the 'boss' was coming or sometimes his nickname was mentioned to alert us that the principal was coming, every student would disappear into thin air.

But in some of the schools, the son of the principal is also a student; he respects his father, honours his public position, and behaves himself accordingly. In fact, it places more responsibility on the son of the principal to behave himself according to the law

because of who he is, but when he gets home, he relates with the father at home different from the way he relates with the principal in school. He now relates with him as ‘Daddy.’ When he comes into his office, he calls him ‘Daddy’. Many people relate with God as God the creator alone, but God asks us to come into a closer relationship as a son to his father, which is so important. That’s one of the basic strengths of a powerful prayer life—a son coming to his father; with that confidence and assurance that God will give him, welcome him and hear him.

The next thing He’s teaching us is that God does not give evil things when you are asking for something good. How will you know what is bread, fish, or egg? You are going to find out those things from the promises of God. Many people ask and get serpents and scorpions because they asked for those things. God will never give you stone if you ask for bread. I wrote this book so that you can know what to ask for in prayer. The Bible says in James, Chapter 4, verse 3 that ‘Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.’ It is possible to ask amiss, to ask wrong, and to ask what God didn’t say He’s going to give. You know there are some people who say, ‘God is teaching me

humility with this sickness.’ No! God doesn’t teach you humility with sickness. ‘How many of you being a father . . . ?’—That’s what Jesus is saying here. ‘If your son is asking you for bread, will you give him a stone or will you give him scorpion in place of fish?’ That’s as good as a father teaching his son obedience by breaking his leg. God doesn’t teach obedience like that. He doesn’t say ‘I love you so much, my girl. I want you to know how to respect Me’ and cracks her head. God doesn’t do that.

Many people have attributed such things to God ignorantly and without a scriptural foundation. The above verse is correcting that wrong thinking. If you ask for bread, God won’t give you a stone; if you ask for a fish, He won’t give you a serpent; and if you ask for an egg, He won’t give you a scorpion. Those are negative things. Those things are there, and they can’t be coming from God. The Bible says, ‘Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God’ (James 1: 17). That means anything less than good and perfect comes from the devil. Therefore, don’t ever catch yourself, falling prey to that religious lie, lying against the truth of the Word of God, saying, ‘God is teaching me humility. In fact, if I didn’t go to the hospital, I wouldn’t have learnt

how to pray.’ You could have learnt how to pray in obedience. It was disobedience that caused the person to go to the hospital; God did not take him to the hospital to teach him how to pray. No father takes his son to the hospital, beats him, or destroys him so that he can learn something. That’s not a good father—that’s a terrorist and a tyrant. God is not a terrorist, neither is He a tyrant—He’s a father. I want you to hold on to this truth that your Father is a good father. If the heavenly Father is a good father, and you have a relationship with Him, He has wonderful things in store for you. Let that mentality of a son possess you, and think of God as your father. He loves you, and He wants you.

Chapter 10

The Power and Benefits of Thanksgiving

NOW LET'S LOOK at something very crucial in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ—thanksgiving, from the book of John, Chapter 6, verse 11:

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. (John 6:11)

I want you to take note of something very crucial in all the passages we have been reading about the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed not too long in public because He did the bulk of His praying in private. You know, there are people today who have a problem with a man who prays briefly in public. Many times, long prayer in public is a result of somebody not praying in the secret. Top priority must be given to private prayer. Our prayers should be a private and personal interaction with God. Many

times you see people praying for show in public, or praying to catch up on the prayers that they should have done in private. Jesus prayed to change things in public, and when He prayed to receive things from God, He did it privately, in the secret. We all should learn from this. He was just coming out publicly to release commands, instructions, telling the devil to do things, situations to obey, and telling conditions to change. That's still an aspect of prayer, commanding prayer, authoritative prayer, but that is the public side. The private side is what we have been dealing with, where the power of God comes, where we connect to the power of God, and where we interact with God, and He fills our lives, He guides us, and speaks to us.

In the book of John, Chapters 6 and 11, we see major miracles in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John, Chapter 6, He had to feed 5,000 men with five loaves and two small fishes, a daunting situation by any standard; and in John, Chapter 11, He had to raise a man who had been dead and buried for four days, which is completely impossible naturally. But look at how Jesus started in both cases: He gave thanks to God. There's power in thanksgiving, and this is what I want to show you.

Many people don't engage in thanksgiving in their walk with God and they miss out on the blessing of God. Let's look at some people who missed out on the blessing and the power of thanksgiving:

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. (Luke 17: 11-19)

I believe that this man received something that the

others did not receive. That's one thing that you must learn. Thanksgiving gives you something that the person who does not give thanks does not get. Even in any culture, when somebody gives thanks, it prepares the ground for further favours and blessings. It is the same with God. Jesus made a comment on the person that came to thank God here. That tells you the will of God, the mind of God, and the attitude of God to people who don't show thanksgiving, who are not grateful to God for what He did. Many times, you see people when they are sharing testimonies of miracles that God did in their lives; they talk so much about how they prayed, how they fasted, what they did themselves, and their faith and forget to mention what God did. You should note this that your faith will be useless if there's no God that it connects to and who will honour that faith. Your prayer will be useless if there's no God who answers prayers. Your fasting will be completely pointless if there's no God who honours that fasting.

Give God the Glory

Thanksgiving is recognising the place of God. Thanksgiving is making it clear that it is not you who did it but God. Thanksgiving is giving God the glory

due to Him. Never take the glory that is due to God. The Bible says, 'Give unto God the glory due him.' What glory?

1. The glory of Deity. God is God, never to be compared with any other thing. This glory belongs to God.
2. The glory of Supremacy belongs to God. Never compare God with anything; nothing is bigger than God.
3. The glory of the Acts of God belongs to God.

These three levels of glory belong to God; not to give them to Him is stealing something from God.

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. (Isa. 42: 8)

No matter how loving God is, one thing that He will not share with any man is His glory. One way you can always return the glory back to God is through thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a way of recognising that it is the Lord who is doing it and that you are not the one. There are many people who commend men of God, thanking and appreciating them, but men of

God must return all those thanks and appreciation that people bring to them back to God. Sometimes some of our listeners on radio and television write wonderful letters to us, but we have to take them back to God because we are just vessels in His hands, channels through which He's moving to bless His people. We must return the praise and the thanks to God because they belong to Him. If He didn't give the anointing, the knowledge, understanding, and revelations, there will be nothing to share.

After the Same Manner

This was demonstrated in the life of Jesus, even at the communion table in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 11. The Bible tells us that Jesus gave thanks and that is something that was a major practice in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After *the same manner* also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood:

this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (1 Cor. 11: 23-25)

What manner? Giving thanks first of all. Let me ask you: did you say ‘Thank you, Jesus’ today? How many times a day do you say ‘Thank you, Jesus’? How many things do you thank Jesus for? You know, most times we get so full of complaints with concern and with what God has not done that we don’t remember the things that He has done and the other things that He is doing. Many times we get so carried away with the needs in our lives that we don’t see the deeds of God, the goodness of God already going on in our lives. The devil likes that because he wants to confuse people that God is not good, but God is forever good. A man who is always thanking God will be walking in the goodness of God.

Let Thanksgiving Become Thanks *Living*

You have to practice thanksgiving. Thanksgiving must become thanks living. What do I mean by thanks living? That you don’t just give thanks to God in prayer expression to God alone.

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 5: 20)

The Bible says something about thanksgiving that I want you to hold on to:

In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thess. 5: 18)

Thanksgiving is the will of God for everyone of us. Do you want to know the will of God for you? It is thanksgiving. Does it mean you should give thanks for what the devil is doing? No. He's saying in every situation, in every circumstance; don't lose your 'thanks expression'. God is always good. There's always something to thank God for. I want to show you what thanksgiving will do in your life when you begin to practice it, not just as a phrase in prayer, but as a way of life that you just get involved with—*wake up thanking God, and go to bed thanking God.*

Sometimes, when you look at what people say first when they wake up and the last thing when they are going to sleep, you will think they believe in the devil rather than God. There are people who wake up complaining, 'Oh, devil, you've come again.' Some people go to bed binding the devil, they wake up binding the devil, and they go through the day binding

the devil. There's more to our walk and supernatural lives than binding the devil. Don't give too much credit to the devil than he deserves. Don't put too much attention on the devil. The devil is real, but God is more real than the devil. The devil is wicked doing wicked things around, but God is good and will do more good in your future than the wickedness of the devil.

What Thanksgiving Does for You

(1) It magnifies God, God's power, and God's presence more than the problems that a man faces. Let me repeat that. Thanksgiving magnifies God, His power, presence, and reality above problems and the devil. Problems in a person's life magnifies the devil's ability and presence, but when the person begins to give thanks to God, it magnifies God, the power, the presence, and the reality of God in his life more than those problems. The more you give thanks to God, the more those problems lose their focus because when you give attention to problems, you give life to them. When you give attention to the devil, you give him more authority in your life; however, when you give your attention to God, you reduce the devil in your life, and that's important.

(2) Thanksgiving refreshes and renews your faith; it renews the substance of faith. Sometimes you can be so battle weary that your faith is overstretched. When you begin to give thanks to God and you just come into the presence of God, not binding the devil, not asking God for anything, but just thanking God for His goodness, for His loving-kindness and for what He has done, it refreshes your faith. Your faith just gets refreshed and renewed, and you are ready to go.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4: 16)

One of the ways to renew your spirit, renew your faith, the love of God, and the forces of the life of God in a man's spirit is through thanksgiving. Living in thanksgiving brings refreshing and renewal to everything that is of God in you.

(3) Thanksgiving renews your love towards God. There is no way you go into the presence of God thanking Him that love for God and love to God will not rise up in you and this renews, strengthens, and kindles you afresh. When a man complains and wonders why God has not answered his prayers, it

becomes easy for that person to backslide, stop praying, and stop reading the Bible, but when you are full of thanksgiving, just looking for what you can thank God for, it makes God more real to you. You know you can practice thanksgiving by looking for what you can thank God for. ‘Oh, thank you, Father, for the beautiful sun, thank you for the air, thank you for me, thank you for my children’—thank God for everything. You are not a mistake; you are a creature of design, a deliberate design of God, so look for things to thank God for. When you do that, it renews your love towards God, just loving Him. It renews your love for the Word of God, the presence of God, and the house of God. Look at what David said:

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. (Ps. 27: 4)

He said further,

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. (Ps. 122: 1)

He was always glad anytime it concerned the things of God. These brought special joy to David. Why? Because he was a man full of thanksgiving. He also

said, 'It is comely for the upright to give thanks to God. In the morning I will thank you, in the afternoon I will thank you.'

He prayed and always thanked God. You look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ: He loved the Father and came to do His will. One of the ways to strengthen love towards God and to renew your love for the things of God is through thanksgiving.

(4) Thanksgiving honours God and recognises God as the doer in your life.

Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. (1 Sam. 2: 30)

One way to despise God is to transfer His honour to another thing or person. It is so easy for a man to transfer the honour of God to his own activities. If God chooses not to answer a prayer, nobody can hold Him to ransom. Thank God because He answers. We thank God for being gracious, for His willingness to be involved in our lives, and for His willingness and loving-kindness to not treat us as our sins deserve or punish according to our mistakes.

You know we make mistakes, but thank God, He is bigger than our mistakes.

Many times, people stay with their mistakes and think God can't answer them again, but it's not true. God is a Father; He forgives you when you repent and continues with you. Thanksgiving is one of the ways to honour God—not to say 'I did it' instead, 'God did it.' I mean, when you thank God publicly, it's obvious to everybody that you are recognising who is behind the success. We need to thank God for everything that we are. Paul said, 'What do you have that you have not received? Why are you behaving as if you have not received it?' One way to behave as if you didn't receive something is not to thank God for it. But when you recognise that whatever you have, whatever gift, anything that people can commend and appreciate in your life is a gift of God, you will thank God for it.

Anything people commend in your life, even if it's something you have done, thank God for that. It's God's involvement. Don't say 'What have I got to do with God?' You know there are some people who say, 'I don't believe in that your God. I'm a self-made man.' A self-made man does not honour God,

and he gets into trouble alone. But a God-made person recognises God, and God is always with him.

(5) Thanksgiving strengthens your faith because it is an expression of confidence in God's ability. It causes your faith to get stronger and stronger, not just renewed or refreshed, but stronger. When you live in thanksgiving, you are giving continuous expression of your confidence in the ability of God to do and to be who He says He is and what He says He will do.

(6) Thanksgiving keeps the devil away from your life. In Isaiah, Chapter 61, the Bible says that the anointing will give us a garment of praise in place of the spirit of heaviness. He will give us the oil of joy for the spirit of sorrow. Sorrow is one of the things that the devil uses to destroy people. The yoke of depression is broken through thanksgiving. It is one of the ways to trigger the flow of joy, which is a major weapon of victory and success in life. Thanksgiving keeps the devil away because it breaks the yoke of depression.

Any time you see a man contemplating suicide, tell him to start thanking God by looking for what he can thank God for. It's when people can't see the

involvement of God in their lives that they think of suicide. Look around and see what God has done, and what you can thank God for; before you know it, within five or ten minutes of thanking God, things will start looking different, and you would have broken that spirit of depression.

When depression comes to a man, it comes with a cloud. You don't see any good, you don't see any hope, and you don't see any way out. But when you begin to thank God, you give release to the flow of joy, and when the flow of joy is released, the power of faith begins to rise up. When the power of faith begins to rise up, the miracle power of God comes, and you are connected to the realm of the possibilities of God.

When a man is walking in unbelief, sorrow, and sadness, he's connected to the realm of the destructive and the demonic, but when you walk in thanksgiving, it connects you to the realm of faith, the possibilities of God. All things are possible with God and to him that believes.

(7) Thanksgiving also keeps you humble; it does not allow pride in your heart because you will not come to the place of taking the glory of God. A man who

lives in constant heart-borne, heartfelt thanksgiving to God will walk in humility before Him.

Humility, as well as pride, is a way of thinking. It is not a way of speaking or walking; rather, it is an attitude of the heart. I know people who talk quietly but they are still proud. Also there are some people who are exuberant but are humble at heart. Look at David who was accused of pride by his brothers, but was acknowledged by God to be humble towards Him because God saw his heart. Thanksgiving comes from a heart that is humble, and recognises the acts of God. It is the heartfelt recognition of a man who knows that without God's involvement, whatever he has succeeded in doing would not have been possible; he also acknowledges God's faithfulness. Whatever you thank God for will multiply in your life, and that's important.

(8) Lastly, thanksgiving will help you to remain a grateful person. You will just be bubbling with the power and the glory of God. It brings the glory of God to radiate upon your life.

Above All

You need to be saved and be sure of your salvation.

Who is Genuinely Saved?

(1) One who has realised he is a sinner. ‘For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.’ (Rom. 3: 23)

(2) One who has heard the gospel of Jesus preached. ‘For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.’ (1 Tim. 2: 5-6)

‘This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of all whom I am chief.’ (1 Tim. 1: 15)

(3) One who has realised through preaching of the gospel the sinfulness of his personal sin.

(4) One who has realised his need of a personal saviour from sin. ‘Jesus said to him, “Do you believe in the son of God?”’ (John 9: 25-36)

(5) One who has made a spiritual wilful decision to turn from sin and his sinful state and turn to Jesus to be his personal saviour. ‘Repent

therefore and be converted so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.’ (Acts 3: 19)

Some people turn to good deed and doing penance or self-torture for a personal saviour; *but only Jesus* can be the personal saviour.

(6) One who has believed the report of God about Jesus. Romans 10: 9-10 says, ‘That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.’

(7) One who has a credible evidence of a changed life and attitude to sin, God, people of God, and the world based on his acceptance of Jesus. ‘Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold they are become new.’ (2 Cor. 5:17)

(8) One who is irrevocably committed to following Jesus, His will, and His Word in all

issues of life. ‘What will you have me to do, Lord?’ (Acts 9: 6)

My friend, are you the one I am talking about? Or are you the one below? Maybe—

- i. You have just joined a born-again church?
- ii. You have a lot of born-again friends?
- iii. You are doing your best not to harm another human being?
- iv. You are full of many good works?
- v. You have just made several good resolutions to turn a new leaf?
- vi. You believe you are good enough as you were born?
- vii. You don’t even believe what the Bible said about Jesus being the Saviour of the world?

If so, my friend you are not saved yet. According to the Bible, *you* cannot make it to heaven. If you want to make it to heaven and escape the danger of hell that will befall the enemies of God, why don’t you pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I see that I am a sinner. Because I was born in sin, I cannot save myself. Today, I ask that you forgive me of my sins and deliver me from the nature of sin. I accept you as my saviour and I confess you as my Lord. Holy Spirit, come into my heart as a seal of eternal life in Jesus's name, amen.

If you have prayed this prayer, I congratulate you and ask that you send me an email at lifoasis@hotmail.com so that we can give you a parcel that will help you in your walk with God.