

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Lesson 9: Let Us Pray

Spiritual Practices

This series concerns genuine life transformation for the believer, and to this point we have covered issues related to developing a renewed mind and living or walking in the Spirit. I have intentionally skipped the so-called spiritual practices such as prayer to avoid a common pitfall – that life transformation happens primarily as a function of doing certain spiritual practices like attending church, reading the Bible, and praying. Indisputably, Christians should do all these things. But a note of warning – People can do all the Christian spiritual practices and not experience growth. The better way to think about the role of spiritual practices is that for Christians who are growing, who are in the process of renewing their minds, and who are walking in the Spirit and in fellowship with God, these Christian practices are a part of the growing Christian's life that contribute to the growth and transformation process. We can do all these things without real transformation, but if we are experiencing genuine transformation these things will be a part of our life.

1. **Prayer Throughout the Bible:** Both the Old Testament and New Testament are full of prayers and references to praying. In fact, there are 171 references to prayer in the New Testament. We can learn how to pray from the many fine examples we have in the Bible. Some of the great OT prayers we can learn from are those of Aaron (Numbers 6:23-26), Nehemiah (see Nehemiah 1:5-11), Daniel (Daniel 9:3-19), David (Psalms 19, 23, 25:4-5, 51), and Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-61). In the NT, Jesus taught his disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:9-15) and he himself frequently prayed (John 17).
2. **Should We Pray?:** Absolutely. Jesus berated the prayers of the scribes and Pharisees, but told his disciples “you should pray like this.” (Matthew 6:9) We are told to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), “in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,” (Philippians 4:6), and to “pray one for another” (James 5:16). We are told because we are in the last days that we must be “sober, and watch unto prayer.” (1 Peter 4:7) We are reminded that the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (James 5:16)
3. **Must We Pray in King James English?:** For better or worse, many of us learn to pray from hearing the public prayers of others. From this we get ideas about how we should position our hands, whether to kneel or not, how to begin and end a prayer, and even about the acceptable language of prayer. In the Bible we see examples of people praying while laying flat on the ground, while kneeling, and while standing. We see different examples of hand postures (e.g., hands lifted up or not). I grew up hearing people who prayed publicly do so with “thee” and “thou” and there is nothing wrong with that, nor is it required. Prayer is about the heart, not eloquence. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit takes up where our own words fail us in prayer. (Romans 8:26)
4. **THE PAUL PRAYER CHALLENGE:** We see the content of Paul's prayers in Romans 1:8-10, 10:1, 12:12, 15:5-6, 15:13, 15:30-37; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9, 16:23; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 2:14-16, 9:12-15, 12:7-9, 13:7-9; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-21, 6:19-20; Philippians 1:3-6, 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, 2:13-16, 3:9-13, 5:23-24, 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 2:16-17, 3:2-5, 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:12, 2:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:3-7, 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 4-7, 25. The CHALLENGE is to generate a list of the things Paul prayed for and incorporate those into our prayer life.