

BIBLICAL PRAYER (6)

A good illustration of the significance of prayer may be seen by using the analogy of an electric power plant. When we are invited to someone's home, we typically see a home that is pretty, nice and clean. Every home we visit has its own unique features and beautiful qualities. To see these nice qualities people typically have lights turned on. Most of the time, we visit homes during the evening hours. When we leave a home the lights usually makes the house look more impressive. It is a great privilege and joy to go visit someone at their home. I have yet to run into anyone who gives the electric power plant credit for their nice looking home. In fact, if the subject of the power company comes up, it is normally in a negative context. Yet without that behind-the-scenes source of power, no one would be able to see anything. If the power ever goes off, everything in the house is at an immediate standstill.

This is precisely the way it is with prayer. It is not given much praise. It is not applauded or discussed as being one of the beautiful qualities of the church. People want to know about children's programs and ministries, such as nurseries, youth programs, music, but I have yet to have someone stop by the church and ask us how many prayer meetings we have. According to the Word of God, we could be a very powerful church without one program, but we could never be a powerful church without prayer. Without prayer God's power will be missing.

When churches are moving in a true Biblical direction, there will be more and more emphasis on the importance of prayer. But it is also true that there isn't much glamour to prayer. The church or believer who neglects prayer will be lacking in power and depth.

(Reason #5) - Because of no real spiritual depth.

We may dogmatically state that people who grow to become truly deep in their spirituality are people who pray. Spiritual depth comes, in part, by prayer. There are many believers who shortchange their spiritual health because they do not take prayer seriously and do not pray regularly.

We live in a world of shallow commitment and shallow theology. As a result Biblical prayer is lacking and so is spiritual depth. Some churches have become so shallow in their spirituality that they actually believe running a program is more important than having a prayer meeting.

The greatest theologian and the most spiritual person to ever walk on this earth was Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ spent many hours in prayer. The fact that many churches are places filled with spiritual invalids, the fact that many churches are losing their reverence for God and losing their focus on Doctrine or systematic exposition of Scripture, is all due in part to a real lack in prayer. You may be certain of this - without a serious commitment to prayer, there will be no real spiritual depth to the individual or church.

(Reason #6) - Because prayer is tough.

Never is prayer portrayed in the Bible as being easy. Frankly, prayer is a tough spiritual discipline and to be disciplined in prayer means one is disciplined in his own mind and life.

BIBLICAL PRAYER (7)

When Jesus Christ took His own disciples Peter, John and James into the mountain to pray, they fell asleep (**Luke 9:28, 32**). They learned that prayer is a difficult and demanding discipline. It is not easy to be a persistent and consistent person of prayer. Seeking to make “every thought captive” (**II Corinthians 10:5**) is a very tough spiritual responsibility.

(Reason #7) - Because prayer demands an obedient and holy life (**John 15:7; James 5:16; I John 3:22**).

A holy, righteous, obedient life to the Word of God is a steep goal which demands discipline and consistency. A consistent prayer life, which sees God do great things, is the fruit of a consistent spiritual life. The two go hand-in-hand.

One who is not developing in righteousness and in obedience will not have a proper or powerful prayer life. Prayer is difficult enough for those who are blossoming in righteousness and obedience. It is practically impossible for those who are not.

We live in a day and age in which many believers do not want to completely yield to God, and for such people prayer will be extremely neglected and difficult.

These are just some of the reasons why real prayer is so foreign to many. It is our hope and our prayer that in understanding some of these things, we may rise above the excuses and apathy to new heights in our own prayer lives so that we may become powerful people of prayer who see God do great things with us, through us and for us. May every one of us pray - “Lord, teach me to pray.”

Arthur Bennett compiled a collection of Puritan prayers and devotions. One of the prayers was called “Living by Prayer” (*The Valley of Vision*, p. 147).

“O God of the open ear,

Teach me to live by prayer as well as by providence, for myself, soul, body, children, family, church. Give me a heart frameable to Thy will; so might I live in prayer, and honor Thee, being kept from evil, known and unknown. Help me to see the sin that accompanies all I do, and the good I can distil from everything. Let me know that the work of prayer is to bring my will to Thine, and that without this it is folly to pray. When I try to bring Thy will to mine, it is to command Christ, to be above Him, and wiser than He: this is my sin and pride. I can only succeed when I pray according to Thy precept and promise and to be done with as it pleases Thee, according to Thy sovereign will. When Thou commandest me to pray for pardon, peace, brokenness, it is because Thou wilt give me the thing promised, for Thy glory, as well as for my good. Help me not only to desire small things but with holy boldness to desire great things for Thy people, for myself, that they and I might live to show Thy glory. Teach me that it is wisdom for me to pray for all I have, out of love, willingly, not of necessity; that I may come to Thee at any time, to lay open my needs acceptably to Thee; that my great sin lies in my not keeping the savor of Thy ways; that the remembrance of this truth is one way to the sense of Thy presence; that there is no wrath like the wrath of being governed by my own lusts for my own ends.”

BIBLICAL PRAYER (8)

QUESTION #3 – What does prayer assume about God?

Prayer that is addressed to God in conformity with the Word of God is one of the greatest forms of worship that a human may offer to God. When we bow our heads to pray, perhaps without even know it, we make several wonderful and accurate theological assumptions.

There are nine major theological assumptions we make about God:

(Theological Assumption #1) - Prayer assumes the Personality of God.

We do not ask things of inanimate objects. When we pray we make an assumption that God is a very real Person who has an intellect that enables Him to think about our requests, Who has emotions that will sympathize and empathize with our request and Who has a will that may choose to do something about our request. Prayer does not just acknowledge the existence of God; it assumes that God is a real Person.

(Theological Assumption #2) - Prayer assumes the Immensity of God.

When we pray we assume that God is completely unlimited in space. Prayer assumes God can hear a prayer offered from one location and answer the prayer in another location. Prayer assumes that God has no spatial limitations.

(Theological Assumption #3) - Prayer assumes the Immanence of God.

Prayer assumes that God is closely connected to us. It assumes that He is so near to us that He can and will answer our specific individual prayers. We also at the same time assume He is near the person or thing for which we are praying.

(Theological Assumption #4) - Prayer assumes the Infinity of God.

When we pray, we assume that God is not limited by any restrictions other than those which He has place upon Himself. For example, when we pray that God will save someone, we assume that God is not even limited by the sinner's own mind or way of thinking. We actually acknowledge that we believe God is capable of working in a person's mind and heart and can save him, something the Bible does fully support (**Proverbs 16:1, 9; 21:1; Ezra 6:22**).

(Theological Assumption #5) - Prayer assumes the Omnipresence of God.

When we pray we assume God is everywhere present. We assume God can hear our prayer in one location and answer it in another by actually being in both locations. A good Biblical illustration of this is found in **Acts 12** in which believers met together to pray for the Apostle Peter, fully believing that God could be with them and with Peter at the same time (**Acts 12:5, 7**). This text is intriguing because God actually brought His answer to their prayers from a different location right while they were praying (**Acts 12:12**).