

BIBLICAL PRAYER (18)

Category #2 - Prayer was a major theme of the New Testament .

We may cite eight examples to show how powerful prayer was to the New Testament:

(Example #1) - It was important to Jesus Christ .

Here is really the only evidence anyone needs to establish the significance of prayer. Since we are to pattern our lives after Jesus Christ, His intense prayer life should be impetus for us to have the same type of prayer life.

1. He prayed at the inauguration of His public ministry. **Luke 3:21**
2. He prayed prior to major confrontations . **Luke 5:16**
3. He prayed before making major decisions . **Luke 6:12-13**
4. He prayed before performing major miracles . **Luke 9:16**
5. He prayed when thinking about His personal suffering . **Luke 9:18**
6. He prayed when thinking about His personal identity . **Luke 9:18**
7. He prayed before His transfiguration . **Luke 9:27-29**
8. He personally taught others how to pray . **Luke 11:1-13**
9. He prayed when facing His most difficult task . **Luke 22:40-46; Hebrews 5:7-8**
10. He challenged others to pray during times of trial . **Luke 22:40, 46**
11. He died praying . **Luke 23:24, 46**

Jesus Christ personally placed a major emphasis on prayer. If the Son of God demonstrated the importance of prayer, being perfectly holy and pure, how much more should our emphasis be on prayer since we are all imperfectly sinful and corrupt.

(Example #2) - It was important to the Early Church .

The historical roots of Christianity and local church life are documented for us in Acts. As we journey through Acts, we discover that the early church had a high level of commitment to prayer. It is one of the key reasons why the early church was so powerful.

1. It was prayer that preceded the Church Age and coming of the Holy Spirit. **Acts 1:14; Luke 24:49**
2. It was prayer that was critical to early church development . **Acts 2:42**
3. It was prayer that gave the early church the boldness to proclaim God's Word in the face of serious opposition. **Acts 4:24, 31**
4. It was prayer that was a very important part of early church leadership . **Acts 6:4**
5. It was prayer that was an important part of early church conversions . **Acts 8:15**
6. It was prayer that was a critical part of stopping God from pouring out His judgment on individuals. **Acts 8:24**
7. It was prayer that was closely connected to the Church Age expanding its ministry to the Gentile world. **Acts 10:2, 4, 9**

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8. It was prayer that was critical to the protection and survival of early church leaders.
Acts 12:5, 12, 18-19

Andrew Murray, concerning prayer and the early church, wrote, “The whole power of the Roman Empire as represented by Herod, was impotent in the presence of the power the church ...wielded in prayer” (*The Ministry of Intercession*, p. 31).

9. It was prayer that became a critical part of determining who belonged in ministry .
Acts 13:2-3

Again the words of Murray are eloquent: “God in heaven would not send forth His chosen servants without the cooperation of His church; men on earth were to have a real partnership in the work of God. It was prayer that fitted and prepared them for this; it was to praying men the Holy Spirit gave authority to do His work and use His name. It was through prayer the Holy Spirit was given. It is still prayer that is the only secret of true church extension, that is guided from heaven to find and send forth God-called and God-empowered men” (Ibid., p. 31).

When it comes to the selection of a pastor, many churches make a fatal mistake. They handle the selection process in almost the same manner of the business world. They demands resumes and look for references. We would agree that there certainly is a place for discovering who a minister was trained by and where a minister has ministered. However, if any church desires God’s choice in the matter, it must be a church that prays fervently.

It is very clear that prayer was a critical part of the early church. As Murray said, “The story of the early days of the church is God’s great object lesson, to teach His church what prayer can do ... it most surely can draw down the treasures and powers of heaven into the life of earth” (Ibid., p. 31).

Churches that want God’s power will be churches who want to Biblically pray. The more serious the church becomes about prayer to heaven, the more powerful the church will become for God on earth.

(Example #3) - It was important to Paul .

One of the central keys to the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul was his prayer ministry. Time and time again he emphasized the importance of prayer. He, himself, was a diligent man of prayer and he continually challenged others to pray for him. Paul had a consistent and persistent prayer life and it is not wonder he accomplished such powerful things for God.

1. Paul believed prayer was essential to growing deep in the things of God. **Eph. 1:16-19**
2. Paul believed prayer was critical to victory over spiritual and satanic forces. **Eph. 6:11-18**
3. Paul believed prayer was a key to his freedom and boldness to minister.
Phil. 1:19; Eph. 6:19-20
4. Paul believed prayer was a key to unity and a preventative to anxiety . **Phil. 4:2-7**
5. Paul believed prayer was the key to his ministry success . **Col. 4:3-4; I Thess. 5:25**
6. Paul believed prayer was the key to success in the life of the church . **I Thess. 5:17**

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7. Paul believed prayer was the key to the rapid spread of the Word and to deliverance from evil enemies . **II Thess. 3:1-2**
8. Paul believed prayer was important for every person. **I Tim. 2:1**
9. Paul believed prayer was critical to the political leadership of a nation and for their ability to govern their constituency in a proper way. **I Tim. 2:2**
10. Paul believed prayer was essential to him being able to minister in various places , to various people . Satan did not want Paul to minister God's truth and Paul knew a key to stopping the power of Satan was the power of prayer. **Philemon 22**

There can be no question that prayer was a key part of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. It is no wonder God so greatly used him for God's power was with him through prayer.

(Example #4) - It was important to James .

James was one of, if not the, earliest New Testament books to be written. There is no question that James was a man of prayer and he knew the importance of prayer.

1. James believed prayer was a key to having wisdom that enabled a believer to cope with various trials . **James 1:5-6**
2. James believed prayer was a key to being delivered from suffering and sickness .
James 5:13
3. James believed there was great power in the collective prayer of the elders in sickness related to sin . Confession of sin can lead to healing. **James 5:14-15**
4. James believed that a person living a righteous life had the potential of accomplishing powerful things through persistent prayer. **James 5:16-18**

It is interesting to observe in the illustration of Elijah's prayer concerning rain that it was not instantly answered, but was eventually answered (**I Kings 18:41-44**).

Clearly James was a man who took prayer seriously and taught others to do the same.

(Example #5) - It was important to Peter .

We would naturally expect that one who had personally spent time with Jesus Christ would have a serious perspective of prayer and Peter was one such apostle:

1. Peter believed that it was important that both husbands and wives pray and he believed their attitudes toward each other determined whether or not God would answer. **I Peter 3:7**
2. Peter believed that one of the key actions that believers should be involved in as we near the coming of Jesus Christ was a serious, sober-minded, sound prayer life. **I Peter 4:7**
3. Peter believed that we should take all of our cares and anxieties to the Lord in prayer.
I Peter 5:7

The word "anxiety" refers to all of one's personal cares and anxieties. The word "cast" is the same word used in **Luke 19:35** that refers to throwing something onto something else, specifically throwing garments on a donkey. Peter's concept of prayer was that you literally throw "all" of the things that make you anxious upon God through prayer. Turn them over to Him and let Him carry them.

Peter was a man of power and he certainly was a man of prayer.

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(Example #6) - It was important to John.

The Apostle John listened to Jesus Christ teach on the subject of prayer many times (**i.e. John 14:13; 15:7**). It is clear that it made a tremendous impact on his life and ministry.

The Apostle John also took prayer seriously.

1. John believed that the specific prayer of confession of sin was the central key to having fellowship with God as a believer. **I John 1:9**
2. John believed that an obedient believer had a tremendous potential to receive powerful answers to specific prayers. **I John 3:22**
3. John believed that prayer was the key to having confidence in God and to receive answers from God. The more we pray in accordance with the will of God, the more confidence we have because we will see God answer. **I John 5:14-16**
4. John believed that prayer was a key to seeing other brothers delivered from sin. The life that God may grant in view of such prayer may be both spiritual and physical. **I John 5:16**

(Example #7) - It was important to Jude.

Jude believed that prayer was a key to being built up in the faith system. Praying people are the most stable people of all and non-praying people are the most fickle. In the context of Jude, the stability was in the face of doctrinal apostasy and having a stability that could contend for the faith (**vv. 3-4**). Pray was the key to a faith that is stable.

(Example #8) - It is important to the Throne of God. **Revelation 5:8**

Perhaps there is no greater example of the importance of prayer than when we see what is happening at the Throne of God after the Rapture just prior to the Tribulation. All of the prayers of God's people are released just prior to God's grand finale. This clearly shows the importance of prayer in the mind of God at the Throne of God.

The first formal record we have of a prayer in the Bible is Genesis 4:26. The last prayer we have recorded in the Bible is Revelation 22:20.

As we have conducted this brief sketch through the Old and the New Testaments, we may dogmatically conclude that prayer was a central part of Biblical life. Therefore, if we expect to live an impacting, spiritual, Biblical, God-honoring life, we must be individuals who pray and we must be a church that prays.