

## **Keys to Effective Prayer**

### **Colossians 4:1-4**

Does prayer really work? \*\*\*Will God answer every prayer I pray when I pray in faith? \*\*\*My marriage is in shambles, can I ask God to turn it around & He will do it? \*\*\*My kids have left the Lord, can I pray that they come back and will God answer? \*\*\*Can the power of prayer move mountains in my life if I believe? Mountains of fear? Mountains of doubt? Mountains of debt? Mountains of loneliness? Mountains of sin? Mountains of sickness?

Joshua prayed & the sun stood still & the moon stopped in the sky for about a day as he fought & defeated Andoni-Zedek & 4 kings. Elijah prayed & the heavens were shut up for 3 1/2 years to discipline Israel for their waywardness. Moses while fleeing from the Egyptian army prayed & Red sea parted. Elisha asked God to open his servant Gahazi's eyes to see the unseen world of God's protecting angels. Jesus prayed from the cross '**Father forgiven their sins**' 50 days later on Pentecost 3000 souls were saved in answer. Peter & John prayed for lame man at Gate beautiful who'd never walked & he rose to his feet. Jesus said **Mark 11:24...all things for which you pray & ask believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you**

**But, you say, these were bible super-hero's & I'm an ordinary Christian. 'I'm not like Elijah, I'd never expect to see the kind of answer to prayer he got**

Bible says **Elijah was a man of like passion as we are James 5:17**. At one point He got so depressed he hid in a cave. Not until God exhorted '**get up, get back to ministry**' & he did 1 Kings 19. David a man of great faith at times was in great despair. He cried '**why are you in despair oh my soul? And why are your disquieted w/in me? Hope in God.... Ps 42:5**

Some of Gods greatest saints have '**fainting fits**' as Spurgeon calls them. **Billy Graham's** family nicknamed him **Puddleglum** from C.S. Lewis's **Chronicles of Narnia**, a brave but glum creature, always expecting the worst.

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They saw a side of **BG** the public didn't see—dubious, pessimistic tendencies he had to fight w/ constantly.

**David Brainerd**, at age 24 a missionary to the American Indians, died at 29. **Andrew Murray** writes *'Brainerd's example rebukes the prayerlessness & luke-warmness of most Christian lives. God has no more precious gift to give to a church or an age than a man who lives as the embodiment of His will & inspires those around him w/ the faith of what grace can do'*

Yet even a man such as this had setbacks in his faith & prayer life. At times he spoke as if unconverted because of such deep depression. He writes in his journal... *'Spent this day in fasting & prayer alone. In the morning, was very dull & lifeless, melancholy & discouraged- Satan took occasion to tempt & buffet me w/ these cursed suggestions; 'There is no God, or if there be, He is not able to convert the Indians'...I was very weak & weary, & my soul borne down w/ perplexity...Was much confused & perplexed in my thoughts; could not pray & was almost discouraged, thinking I should never be able to preach any more.'* At times he said he felt abandoned, forsaken & deserted by God.

It doesn't take **great** faith just **engaged** faith. I can have the most powerful drag-race motorcycle in the Islands & be beaten in a race by a Mophead. If my gears aren't engaged I'm going nowhere & if the Mophead's are he'll win.

Paul tells us to **engage our prayer gears**. *God is the same yesterday, today & forever*. So when we pray we might know the power of Elijah; to have the effectiveness of Moses in getting prayers answered; possess the confidence of Joshua when praying for what seems impossible.

*Col 4:1-4 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven. 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.*

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### **Colossians 4:1-4**

Paul lists four parts to prayer. When exercised becomes a powerful tool to draw us close to the heart of God and move the hand of God.

Acrostic PRAY

**Persist** – *devote yourselves to prayer* – persist to the point of stubbornness

*Luke 11:5-10 And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';*

*7 and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'*

*8 "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

*9 "And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*

*10 "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.*

The church began in a prayer meeting & continued that way throughout the NT--It's no time to stop now. Acts 1:14;2:42 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer...Acts 6:4 'But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Acts 28:8..Paul prayed, laid his hands on Publius' father & healed him....First chapter the church prayed & last chapter still praying.

*Devoted* means a steady persistence-**1 Thes 5:17 'Pray without ceasing.'** Disciples prayed as they traveled. 10 mile journey from town to town took up most of the day. Shepherds prayed watching their flocks. Field workers as plow, plant & harvest. Church powerful marches on knees--The pillar of 1<sup>st</sup> C church.

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Prayer is as much an **attitude** as an **activity**. Posture is not as important as position of the heart. I've heard fold hands, close eyes, bow head. You can look pious on the outside yet not touch God. But if your heart is right, it doesn't matter what the posture of the body is; driving, walking, paddling, dishes, vacuum, mowing lawn, eating lunch, etc. **He loves it and hears you**.

*Devoted* means to adhere closely to, attend continually upon. A picture emerges in *Mark 3:9* '**So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him**'.

The idea is to persevere in, keep on, persist in prayer. Not giving up when you feel spiritually dry, emotionally drained, physically spent or just plain **don't care or feel like it**. We are exhorted to **be ready in season & out of season 2 Tim 2:4**

Spurgeon: 'I believe that when we cannot pray, it is time that we prayed more than ever. And if you answer, 'But how can that be?' I would say, pray to pray. Pray for prayer. Pray for the spirit of supplication. Do not be content to say, 'I would pray if I could.' No, but if you cannot pray, pray till you can. **P-persist**

Be **Ready** in prayer, *keeping alert in it*. From two Grk words, to hunt and to sleep or **to hunt down sleep w/ the purpose of not letting it overtake you, but instead be wakeful & ready**. Illus of a runner at the starting line '**on your mark, get set, sleep!**' No! You are at the starting gate to run not fall asleep. **Matt 26:38 Then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with me.'**

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Two reasons Jesus stresses watchfulness/readiness in prayer-  
Rapture & Devil.

First: Rapture *1 Thes 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. Matt 25:13 Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. Rev 16:15 Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.'*

For those who keep alert there is nothing to worry about. *1 Thes 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief* If Jesus was coming at 3 pm today would you be ready? Is there anything you'd be ashamed of or need to repent of or get rid of? Do you need to do some house cleaning?

*1 Jn 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 1 Jn 3:2,3 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

Second: Satan's schemes – he seeks to neutralize your witness for Christ. Tragic – once strong saints, powerful witnesses for Christ, now ineffective, compromised & fallen. What happened? Like Peter they were *sleeping-should have been praying*

*Matt 26:41 'Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'* *1 Pet 5:8-9 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert your adversary, the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*

A, B, C's of Satan's snares: A. People who draw you away from the Lord and bring ruin to your faith. *Pr 12:26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray. Ezra 10:11 Confess your sin to the Lord God of your fathers and do what he demands: separate yourselves from the heathen people about you and from these women.'* TLB

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***Don't be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever—how can two walk together unless they agree? 1 Cor 15:33 Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'*** **The devil uses people to pull you away from God.** *Acts 20:29-31 'I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 'Therefore be on the alert'*

B. The Blues – dejection because of failure *Pr 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. Pr 18:14 The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but a broken spirit who can bear?* Peter failed when he denied the Lord then went out & wept bitterly. Jesus previously said *I have prayed for you Peter that your faith fail not Lk 22:32.* **Jesus is praying for you ...He ever lives to make intercession Heb 7:25**

C. Bitterness - *Heb 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled* Like a weed that grows & takes over *Eph 4:31,32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* **Pull the weeds of bitterness out of your life & plant a tree of kindness**

**Adoration** in your praying – *w/ an attitude of thanksgiving* – 1 Sam 7:7-14 Ebenezer stone, stone of help, stone of remembrance. Looks back & ahead. *Eph 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 1 Thes 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.*

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We keep faith fresh & alive remembering back to what God did in the past & thank Him for what he is doing now. Songs of adoration are songs of the redeemed.

***Rev 5:9-10 And they say a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on earth.***

**You** prayers, not me prayers -

**3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;**

**4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.**

Paul asks that they intercede for him. Paul is in prison facing a possible death sentence. He doesn't say pray that God

\*\* Soften Nero's heart that he go easy on me

\*\* Pray an angel deliver me like he did Peter

\*\* That God send an earthquake & shake the prison down like in Philippi

\*\* That God provide bail money

But that God give ability & opportunity to speak His word & make clear His message. You prayers, that glorify God and expand His kingdom.

No selfish prayers, 'gimme this or get me otta that' No prayer for deliverance from trials but for open doors in the midst of the trials. We need wisdom in praying for others.

We might be tempted to pray for a persons' deliverance from a trial when God wants to use the trial to teach them & mature them or that

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they be a witness for Him in the midst of the trial. ***Rom 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.***

Persist—Ready—Adoration—You

Devote—Alert---Thanksgiving--Intercede