

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT PART SIX THE HABIT OF PRAYING LIKE DANIEL

In 1989 a Mormon named Steven R. Covey wrote a #1 National Best-selling book called, *THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE*. Those seven habits were: Be proactive; Begin with the end in mind; Put first things first; Think win-win; Seek first to understand, then be understood; Synergize; Sharpen the saw.

Over the past ten years this book has seen phenomenal sales. The title is what attracted me. This morning as a disciple of Jesus Christ, we should each be learning the SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CHRISTIANS.

The life of a 7th Century BC. teenager named Daniel offers us the clearest example of how to cultivate a life of praying in the Spirit. Daniel went through just about every situation we could imagine. He was captured in war and saw many family and friends terribly slaughtered. He was subjected to great danger as he was abducted and sent off as booty to the winning side. In these trials and through 7 decades of action filled living one common denominator is found in his life: DANIEL PRAYS!

This morning lets learn this most powerful habit of all: HABITS OF PRAYER. From God's Word, in the book of Daniel lets explore and discover what made up these habits. And then by God's grace – let us cultivate these habits.

First we need to listen to him pray. Please stand as we listen in the prayer closet of God's mighty servant Daniel. I'll be reading Daniel 9: 1-19 if you wish to follow along.

Daniel's life contained seven ingredients that blended into his powerful and godly life. These are:

- I. MAKE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT OBEYING GOD. Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (KJV)
- II. GIVE GOD THE CREDIT, ALWAYS. Daniel 2:19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven (NIV)
- III. POINT TO GOD WHEN PEOPLE LOOK TO YOU. Daniel 2:28 "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: (NKJV)

- IV. HAVE THE UNSHAKABLE CONVICTION THAT GOD REIGNS. Daniel 2:44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. (NIV); Daniel 4:17 "The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.' (NIV) DO YOU SEE THIS TRUTH ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT OCCURS?
- V. REFUSE TO FEAR MERE MORTALS. Daniel 4:25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. (KJV)
- VI. GET AND KEEP GODLY CONTENTMENT. Daniel 5:17 Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means. (NIV) THIS IS A LIBERATING HABIT!
- VII. REMIND YOURSELF WHO OWNS YOUR BREATH. Daniel 5:23 "And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who *holds* your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. (NKJV)

Just before we stop with Daniel did you know HE IS THE MOST AMAZING MODEL OF PRAYER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT? Why? There are ten different words the Holy Spirit chose to portray godly praying. Daniel either models or uses all ten of these words. No where else in all the Scriptures are these ten words all found in one persons life. Let me trace them for you this morning before we go!

Ten specific words sum up how saints in the Old Testament prayed. Here is how they came to God in:

1. REQUEST PRAYING
2. MERCY SEEKING PRAYING
3. URGENT PRAYING
4. HUMBLE PRAYING
5. FRAGRANT INCENSE PRAYING
6. FALLING BEFORE GOD AS KING PRAYING
7. WORD FILLED PRAYING
8. PERSONAL SUPPLICATION PRAYING
9. HABITUAL PRAYING
10. PLEADING PRAYING

REQUEST PRAYING

The first type of praying in the book of Daniel is described in Daniel 2:18 that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. This is the idea behind the Hebrew word (six) SHAAL, means "very specific requests, definite asking". This is the simplest of all prayers, it finds a need and takes it to God! The portrait of this approach to God may be seen in its uses not associated with prayer: Exodus 3:22; 11:2; 13:14 - asking for things from the Egyptians. I Samuel 12:17 - Israel asking for a king... But as we see it in describing prayers, it takes on special meaning. Note David as he "inquires of the Lord" to know where to go and what to do in II Samuel 2:1; 5:19,23. Also, see Solomon as he specifically asks for wisdom in I Kings 3:10-11. In every instance the word portrays a very earnest "seeking for specific needs of direction, provision or help". Thus, we come to God in prayer "specifically".

MERCY SEEKING PRAYING

We see a second type of praying illustrated by the words of Daniel 2:18 that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. The message of word eight, CHANAN, is that we are those who come "imploring God's mercy". It is a word always associated with God's mercy in not giving us what we deserve. Some verses demonstrating this are:

- Exodus 33:19 "Be GRACIOUS to us"
- Job 19:17 "We INTREAT thee"
- Job 19:21 "Have PITY..."
- Psalms 51:1 "Have MERCY upon me"
- I Kings 8:33 "Make SUPPLICATION"
- Deuteronomy 3:23 "BESOUGHT the Lord"

Thus we must, out of a heart aware that we deserve nothing but punishment for our sin, come "imploringly". Prayer is the outflow of a total preoccupation upon the person and works of our Lord and Savior. Do you approach God meditatively? Take a verse in Psalms 119, and after getting absorbed in it, flow out in prayer to our God; try vs. 18,162,165. Imploringly? Do you see that it is only by God's mercy that we even live?

URGENT PRAYING

Daniel 6:10a Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. There is another Hebrew word that is not in Daniel but the situation it is used in does occur in the book. When Joseph's brothers faced him as king they were afraid of his awesome power. In a good sense we need to revere our God. Genesis 50:17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. This

is the seventh Hebrew word, NAH, is the expression of a "reverent heart requesting before an awesome God, being aware of complete unworthiness". In Exodus 33:18, we see Moses so coming to God. Also, Numbers 12:12 and Judges 13:8 beautifully show this coming to God "reverently".

HUMBLE PRAYING

Daniel 6:10b Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. Word four, TZALAH, literally means "to bend, bow, to pray". It encompasses the entire subject of humility, both in our approach to life and in our approach to God. We find this key word in two of the great Old Testament prayer warriors' lives. In Ezra 6:10, the word appears twice, and it appears again in Daniel 6:10. In these and all other uses in literature, the focus is upon a humble approach. And so, as we are those called to approach the living God, we must "approach humbly", as one bowing. First of all, those saints came to God with lives laid open, cleansing sought and communion being the way of their everyday lives with God. They came as helpless to the only one who could help. Is that an approach to God you can start with today? Tomorrow and the next day too? And as you approach that King, bow. Are we characterized by a humble approach to our God? If not, ask Him even now to humble you and draw you into His majestic presence.

FRAGRANT INCENSE PRAYING

The habit of life long praying illustrates another Hebrew word used to describe prayer. In Daniel 6:10c Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

- ✓ Now look in Psalm 141:2 May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.
- ✓ Remember in Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
- ✓ This is the word (one) GNATHAR, is used by Job, Moses and Manoah. This word speaks of intense supplication (Job 33:26). It is also used of Moses (Exodus 8:30, 9:28, 10:17) when he asked God to stop the plagues. Thus it means "earnestly". And so must our hearts be as we approach the Living God. Prayer in humility and all reverence is our approach to the Creator and Sustainer of all. And the Old Testament, through graphic words, paints a glorious portrait of just how we can do so. The first exhorts us to come to God EARNESTLY! Have you come to God earnestly and with great desire in prayer lately? If so, was it because of an emergency or because you acknowledge how much you love Him and need Him? If you have never done this before, or if it has been a long time, do an inventory. Have you come with great, earnest desire to God to be holy? Do your prayers rise like burning incense before the Lord seeking to see lost loved ones saved? Do your

prayers rise like burning incense before the Lord seeking to see godliness in your thoughts, words and actions? Do your prayers rise like burning incense before the Lord seeking to understand God's word?

FALLING BEFORE GOD AS KING PRAYING

In Daniel 6:11 Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.. In all fifteen times word three, BAHNGACH, is found in the Old Testament, it is used of Daniel in his humble approach to God as a king, an all powerful sovereign who must be revered. The faithful petitions that Daniel offered three times a day in Daniel 6:11,13 are among the uses of this word. The same root word is also translated "inquire" in Isaiah 21:12 and 64:2. In short, this prayer word emphasizes the great aspect of our approach to God, "seeking as from a king". The venerable Daniel, serving in the court of two world emperors, was honored because he learned how to fall before the Eternal King of the Ages! Do you revere God as King? If so, approach Him even now and seek as from a King!

WORD FILLED PRAYING

In Daniel 9:2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. When prayers flow from Bible study it is word filled praying. That is just what Daniel was doing! Word five, SEACH, is used to describe the deep and intense pondering upon God's Word. More than just reading, it is deep and absorbing; in fact, the same word is translated in diverse ways, yet all communicating the total preoccupation of the one involved. Let's look at some translations of the word:

"MEDITATION" in Psalms 119:15,23,27,48,78,97,148.

Psalm 119:15 I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. 23 Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on Your statutes. 27 Make me understand the way of Your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wondrous works.

"COMPLAINT" in Job 7:13; 9:27; 10:1; 21:4. "BABBLING OF A DRUNK" in Proverbs 23:29.

"TALK YE..." in 1 Chronicles 16:9 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! Psalms 105:2. Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!

What do these teach us? Prayer is our approach to a master so wondrous, it demands all our focus and concentration. We must come, then, in "deep heartfelt thought that pours out in meditation" or, in short, "meditatively".

PERSONAL SUPPLICATION PRAYING

In Daniel 9:3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. (also 9:17, 21) This word (ten)

TEPHILAH, concludes our words and is the "full hearted outpouring of worshipful praise and communion with God". More than half of the occurrences of this word are in the Psalms. The rest come in the prayers of Solomon (I Kings 8:28); Nehemiah (1:6; 11:17); David (Psalms 4:1; 17:11 61:1); Moses (Psalms 91 title); Isaiah (37:4); Jeremiah (7:16); Daniel (9:3,17,21) and Jonah (2:7). What a blessed way to conclude our study of these key Old Testament words. We must be those who come to God "in worshipful communion". And finally, in that short gasp of a word that speaks of a creature that melts before the awesome Creator, are you reverently in worship as you pray? In worship-filled communion? Is your heart filled with the wonders of our God, so that it often overflows in prayer?

HABITUAL PRAYING

In Daniel 9:4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 20 Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God,

Word two, PAHLAL, describes a whole host of dear Old Testament saints, among them Hannah, Daniel, Samuel, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Abraham, Ezra, Nehemiah, Job and Jonah. All eleven had two special traits in common: They judged themselves and they prayed habitually. In other words, their lives were open before God, and He could cleanse them and commune with them at all times. This quality is vital in making us ever able to be in touch with our God. In short, it means "interceedingly". The venerable Daniel, serving in the court of two world emperors, was honored because he learned how to fall before the Eternal King of the Ages! Do you revere God as King? If so, approach Him even now and seek as from a King!

PLEADING PRAYING

In Daniel 9:13 "As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Word nine, CHALAH, speaks of a heart attitude, which would closely relate it to the last word, CHANAN. It means "to come to God apart from any human strength or confidence". Thus we are to come to Him as humble, weak and entreating His mercy. It is a combination of many of the concepts we have already considered. The word itself is used to speak of weakness (Genesis 48:1), sickness (Isaiah 38:1), and disease (I Kings 15:23). But it goes beyond just describing weakness and illness and is used to show an approach to God without human strength, as in Exodus 32:11, I Kings 13:6 and II Kings 13:4. Thus it speaks of "intreatingly" coming to God. Also, be specific. Do you have a prayer list? Are you noting the continued hand of God in your life as He answers your petitions according to His will? Intreatingly? Do you come apart from all human ability and strength?