

## BIBLICAL PRAYER (14)

### QUESTION #5 – How important was prayer to godly men?

A. C. Gaebelien said being alone with God and communing with Him is the strength of the Christian life.

Andrew Murray said prayer is an index of the spiritual life.

J. Vernon McGee said, “The greatest need of the present-day church is prayer ... the church goes forward on its knees” (*J Vernon McGee On Prayer*, p. vii).

Ray Stedman said, “We must either be praying or fainting, there is no other alternative” (*Talking To My Father*, p. 3).

Lehman Strauss said, “I cannot recall a day in the past forty years when I did not pray” (*Sense and Nonsense about Prayer*, p. 10).

John R. Rice said, “The churches are powerless, Christians are neither happy nor prosperous in spiritual matters, our loved ones are unsaved, all because we do not effectually, scripturally, get hold of God in prayer. Revival ... waits on prayer” (*Prayer*, p. 11).

D. L. Moody said, “Those who have left the deepest impression on this sin-cursed earth have been men and women of prayer” (*Prevailing Prayer*, p. 9).

Jonathan Edwards challenged parents and young people in the fall of 1734 to pray on Saturday night and Sunday morning before worship. In the latter part of December, five or six individuals were converted one right after the other. In the early part of 1735 in Northampton an amazing revival broke out in the church. “There was a deep and solemn interest in the great truths of Scripture ... among all classes of people” and the numbers of people immediately skyrocketed. Edwards said approximately 30 people a week were being saved and the numbers of people at his church went from 100 to over 600 (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1, p. lxxxv).

Martin Luther said, “None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience. ... I know whenever I have earnestly prayed, I have been amply heard, and have obtained more than I prayed for ...” (*Table Talk*, p. 201).

John Calvin said, “Prayer, which is the chief exercise of faith, and by which we daily receive God’s benefits.” “It is ... by the benefit of prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us with the Heavenly Father” (*Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, pp. 850-851).

Lewis Sperry Chafer said, “Prayer under grace proves to be a ministry of the believer in his priestly office. ... The greater works of John 14:12-14 are accomplished by the new partnership of Christ with the believer” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7, p. 253).

## **BIBLICAL PRAYER (15)**

### **QUESTION #6 – How important is prayer to the Word of God?**

There is no doubt that God wants His people and His property to be a people and place of prayer. Whether it is God's temple in Jerusalem or the local church in a particular city, it is to be known as a place of prayer (**Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13; I Thessalonians 5:17**).

Prayer has always been a major theme of the Bible and in this section we touch base with just some of the passages that demonstrate how significant this theme actually is. We may systematize this into two main categories:

**Category #1** - Prayer was a major theme of the Old Testament.

We may cite sixteen examples to show how powerful a theme it was:

**(Example #1)** - It was important to Abraham.

Abraham worshipped God through prayer (**Genesis 12:8; 13:4**). Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek by prayer (**Genesis 14:18-20**) and Abraham realized that Melchizedek's spirituality was superior to his own. Abraham pleaded with God to spare lives through prayer (**Genesis 18:22-33**).

**(Example #2)** - It was important to Hagar. **Genesis 21:16-17**

God heard the emotional cry of Hagar and the cry of Ishmael and saved him. The text clearly implies that God saw both Ishmael and Hagar at the same time she was praying.

**(Example #3)** - It was important to Abraham's servant. **Genesis 24:12-15**

When Abraham's servant was sent to find a wife for Isaac, an important woman who would produce a son in the Messianic line (**Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:34**), he carefully prayed and asked God for specific direction. This was an amazing and powerful prayer because getting water for ten camels was no easy job (**Genesis 24:10**).

**(Example #4)** - It was important to Jacob.

Jacob was a man who wrestled with God, which indicates some intense form of struggle and communication (**Genesis 32:24-32 / Hosea 12:4**). When Jacob needed protection from Esau, he prayed and asked God for it (**Genesis 32:9-12**), even though he knows he has previously lied to Esau and cheated him.

All of these individuals were directly connected to Abraham and they obviously learned the principle of prayer from him. Abraham was a tremendous man of prayer and he influenced others to take prayer very seriously in their own individual lives.

## BIBLICAL PRAYER (16)

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

Moses was a tremendous man of prayer. He prayed to God for deliverance from the Egyptians (**Exodus 14:15**). He prayed to God when there was a great need for water (**Exodus 17:4**). He prayed to God for forgiveness of sin (**Exodus 32:31**). He prayed to God for forgiveness of grumbling against leadership (**Numbers 14:1-19**).

It is very important to observe that major political deliverance for Israel features prayer and one who took prayer seriously. This is also true when it comes to spiritual deliverance. When God moved in O.T. history, there were always those with whom Divine communication was taking place. Some person had a great heartbeat to communicate with God, realizing victory comes from Him. It is a very safe and accurate Biblical assumption that without prayer, people are destined to be in some form of bondage, either political or spiritual or both. **Personal prayer is a key to power and victory in any work of God.**

(Example #6) - It was important to Joshua . **Joshua 7:7**

Joshua prayed to God because the Israelites had been defeated at Ai and God revealed to Joshua that the defeat was because there was sin in the camp. Achan was preventing God's blessings from being completely poured out, and until he was removed God would not bless Israel. It was prayer that ultimately revealed this (**Joshua 7:24-8:1**).

(Example #7) - It was important to Hannah . **I Samuel 1:10, 15; 2:1**

Hannah wanted a baby and she earnestly prayed to God and asked Him to give her a son, which God did. Her son became a powerful man of God because his very existence was rooted in prayer.

(Example #8) - It was important to Samuel . **I Samuel 7:9; 12:16-19**

There can be no doubt that Samuel learned of the importance and power of prayer from his mother, Hannah. In fact, many believe that Samuel wrote the book, which means he documented the story of the prayer of his mother connected to his own life. When Israel needed deliverance from the Philistines, Samuel prayed (**I Samuel 7:9**). When Israel rebelled against God and did an evil thing in wanting a king, Samuel prayed (**I Samuel 12:16-19**). Samuel was a mighty man of God and he was a mighty man of prayer.

(Example #9) - It was important to Saul . **I Samuel 14:37**

Saul knew the importance of prayer even though there were times God did not answer his prayers because of his rebellion and stupidity. Saul was a fickle man. For example in **I Samuel 14:24**, he proclaims a national fast under threat of a curse and then in **14:34**, he lifts the fast. It is no wonder God didn't answer some of his prayers; he was a doubled-minded unstable man.

## BIBLICAL PRAYER (17)

**(Example #10)** - It was important to David.

The most prolific prayer warrior in the Old Testament and perhaps in all of the Bible is David. Some of the most moving and powerful prayers in Scripture were penned by him. We may observe from this that David was a man who literally wrote out many of his prayers. There is no doubt that David was a tremendous man of prayer: **Psalms 25:1; 26:1; 28:1; 30:1; 31:1; 34:1; 35:1; 38:1; 40:1; 43:1; 44:1; 51:1; 54:1; 55:1; 61:1; 63:1; 64:1; 145:18-19**. David is perhaps the greatest name in the history of Israel and one reason for this is because he was a man of intense prayer.

**(Example #11)** - It was important to Elijah.

Through prayer Elijah saw God raise a child from the dead (**I Kings 17:20 ff.**). Through prayer Elijah squared off against Ahab on Mount Carmel and saw God's power dramatically displayed (**I Kings 18:36-40, 41-46**).

**(Example #12)** - It was important to Elisha.

At the beginning of Elisha's ministry, he called on the Lord (**II Kings 2:14**). During his ministry, he prayed and raised a Shunammite woman's son (**II Kings 4:33-36**).

**(Example #13)** - It was important to Hezekiah.

Hezekiah actually prayed for a national deliverance from Assyria (**Isaiah 37:14-20**) and actually saw God answer that prayer (**Isaiah 37:36**).

**(Example #14)** - It was important to Ezra. **Ezra 9:5-15**

This remarkable prayer was made by Ezra while Israel was in exile after the Babylonian captivity, during the Persian captivity (**Ezra 1:1 / 2:1**). This prayer confessed sin, thanked God for His grace to restore the temple and asks God for His blessings, even though not deserved.

**(Example #15)** - It was important to Nehemiah.

Nehemiah prayed when Israel was in great distress (**Nehemiah 1:3-11**). He prayed for God to move so that Jerusalem could be rebuilt (**Nehemiah 2:4-8**).

**(Example #16)** - It was important to Daniel.

Daniel was literally a man whose prayer life meant more to him than his own physical life (**Daniel 6:7/10**). It was Daniel's custom to kneel before God three times a day and offer prayers of thanksgiving (**Daniel 6:10-11**). It was Daniel's study of God's Word (**Daniel 9:2**) that prompted him to pray for God to intervene and set Israel free (**Daniel 9:3-19**).