

Prayer 101: Learning How To Pray Through Life For Those you Love

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

As we open to I Thessalonians 5, there is one tool God left us above all others that is ours alone to use. We are not forced, we are not obligated, we are just offered the single greatest source of unleashing spiritual power through our lives.

And what is that tool we can take or leave each day? It is the tool that keeps us connected to God, His Word, His plan, His power, and His Presence—the choice we make to talk to Him in prayer!

PRAYER IS VITAL

Prayer is how we can open our lives to God's plan and then be used by Him to penetrate the lives of our marriage partner, our children, and our dearest friends with God's truth.

Prayer is how we can see God unleashed in our life and theirs.

Prayer is how we can every day be actively using God's Word and seeing it touch those we love so much.

Prayer is the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry that God has given us, to win spiritual battles. And marriage, discipling, parenting, and grand parenting are all in the context of a great, raging spiritual battle all around and within us, right? That brings us to:

CHRIST'S CLEARER LESSON

When Jesus left Earth and went back to heaven, what did those who were closest to Him remember about Him? What one aspect of His life did they see so often that they couldn't forget, and even more, wanted to copy? Or we could ask, what did the disciples choose to imitate from His life? Or, what was it about Him they couldn't get along without? Prayer, of course.

As Acts 6:4 reminds us, when the disciples made their first personal report on all they learned after 3 ½ years of personal discipleship in Christ's training they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word."

What do we need to do to most help those we love? Pray, of course.

We have a biblical obligation to PRAY. Listen to these reminders in I Samuel 12:23 and Ephesians 6:18:

1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but teach you the good and the right way. (NKJV)

Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- (NKJV)

And what are we watching for? God answering those prayers!

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, **that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.**

WHAT IS CEASELESS PRAYING?

Now, as we move on to our text in I Thessalonians 5, what are we do ceaselessly maintain on the altars of our hearts? The fires of prayer that God wants to flow, following Christ's example—without ceasing.

Did Jesus pray every moment of His life? No, He ate, slept, walked and talked, worked, wept, and even enjoyed meals at the homes of His friends.

But surrounding every decision and every action, He prayed, and so must we.

Please stand as we read I Thessalonians 5:12-22:

1 Th. 5:12-21 (NKJV) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 **pray without ceasing**, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Pray

PRAYER IS THE KEY

God has told us, and His servants have shown us, that prayer is the key to godly living, godly marriages, and the godly ministries of discipling, raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord.

We all should be in a personal, long-term plan to learn how to better and better pray for our children. We are to be sure that we consistently pray for those we nurture and disciple that they have reality in their spiritual lives, integrity in their personal lives, stability in their relational lives, and eternity in their earthly life.

This challenge to prayer is just a summary of the last four chapters of a book I wrote a few years ago called the **Word Filled Family**, a 464 page Bible study, representing two thousand hours invested in prayerful study in the Bible of all that God has said to His

people about how to allow His Word fill and overflow our marriages, homes, families, and lives.

God has shown us that the key to all that He has for us is found through prayer. If we are not praying regularly, and earnestly as individuals and as a couple for our personal lives, our marriage and our family—we are not following His Divine plan laid down for us in His Word. But:

DOES PRAYER WORK?

One of my great heroes of the faith¹ is a missionary who lived from 1824-1907. His name was John Paton, and he was born² in a

“farm cottage not far from Dumfries, Scotland, May 24, 1824. He was the eldest of eleven children. After some snatches of elementary education, he set out to learn the trade of his father -- the manufacture of stockings. For fourteen hours a day he manipulated one of the six "stocking frames" in his father's workshop, using for study most of the two hours allotted each day for the eating of his meals”.

To learn the secret of his life as a pioneer missionary is to learn of the power of his parent's prayers for him. Remember that prayer catapults us to the frontiers of what ever God is doing around the earth, and that is exactly what John Paton had been taught by example. Here is just one page from the life of this most amazing servant of God:

“It was New Year's Day, 1861, on the island of Tanna, in the New Hebrides. The missionaries had spent the day taking medicine, food, and water to the villagers, hundreds of whom were smitten down with a virulent type of measles. In the evening, the missionaries knelt in the mission house in a fervent prayer of consecration of their all to Christ and of petition for the salvation of the cannibals among whom they lived.

They solemnly committed themselves to the protecting presence of their Lord, not knowing that even then the house was surrounded by fierce savages, armed with clubs, killing-stones and muskets, determined to slay and eat the foreigners whose God, they believed, had brought disease, hurricanes, and other troubles upon them.

After the worship, the younger missionary stepped out of the door to go to his own house close by. Instantly he was attacked and fell to the ground screaming, "Look out! They are trying to kill us!" Rushing to the door the older missionary shouted to the savages, "Yahweh God sees you and will punish you for trying to murder His servants." Two cannibals swung their ponderous clubs and struck at him, but missed, whereupon the entire company fled into the bush.

The younger missionary was in such a state of excitement that for days he was unable to sleep. In fact, his nervous system was unhinged by the shock of the attack, his mind gave way under the apprehension of being killed and eaten by savages, and in three weeks he died.

¹ 020707AM GDGW-20

² Sections quoted from THE APOSTLE OF CHRIST TO THE CANNIBALS OF THE NEW HEBRIDES by Eugene Myers Harrison

The older missionary had already survived many such attacks on his life and was destined to survive many more. John G. Paton -- for such was his name -- found in the presence of his Lord the antidote to fear and the assurance that his life was immortal until his work was accomplished.

"During the crisis," he says in his Autobiography, "I felt calm and firm of soul, standing unafraid and with my whole weight on the promise, '*Lo, I am with you always.*'"

What prepared John G. Paton for that kind of perseverance³ — another fifty years of rugged, faithful missionary labor? His parent's prayers had prepared him. Paton's father, James, was converted at seventeen and immediately convinced his mother and father that the family should have morning and evening prayer together. Paton writes about his father:

"And so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of Family Prayer, morning and evening which my father practiced probably without one single avoidable omission till he lay on his deathbed at seventy-seven years of age. None of us can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there."⁴

INVEST YOUR PRAYERS IN THOSE YOU LOVE

How could we ever see our children do anything of this magnitude? How can we penetrate the lives of our children with these truths? How can we see God unleashed in their lives? How can we every day be actively using God's Word and seeing it touch those children and grandchildren we love so much?

The answer is in the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry to win spiritual battles that God has given us. The key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

That is why Jesus prayed so much and His apostles commanded us to follow that example!

So we as parents have a biblical opportunity and obligation to pray for those we love: our partners, our children, our Bible study group, those we serve with at church, our grandchildren, and so on.

I could summarize the guidelines for each of us to use as we pray in this way:

A FOUR-PART PLAN FOR EVERY BELIEVER'S PRAYERS

There are four elements in the lives of those we love and serve, that we must be sure we ask, seek, and knock for at the Throne of grace and mercy. Those prayers invite the

³ Piper, *A Godward Life*, pp.284-286.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Hand of God to be at work in their lives to stir:

Reality In Their Spiritual Life
Integrity In Their Personal Life
Stability In Their Relational Life
Eternity During Their Temporal/Earthly Life

These truths are the same that we would pray for our Sunday School class, our youth group or grandchildren, a discipleship class, or our very own children living at home, at school, or even married and out of the home.

These truths are for life, and they span our entire ministry with people in the Name of Jesus and for His Glory.

We must pray in faith; and to even more powerfully impact those we love, join with someone in prayer that we can share complete agreement with as we pray. In marriage this is a natural partnership in prayer that God offers to us. So prayerfully we seek God about seeing them grow with **reality in their spiritual life:**

Seeing Them Genuinely Saved. Acts 26:18 1. to open their eyes, in order to 2. turn them from darkness to light, and 3. from the power of Satan to God, 4. that they may receive forgiveness of sins and 5. an inheritance among those who are 6. sanctified by 7. faith in Me.'

[Salvation is a Person living within that slowly changes everything about our lives.]

Seeing Them Loving God's Word. Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary *food*.

[Spiritual hunger is a sign of life and spiritual health.]

Seeing Them Living In Victory. John 8:32, 36 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

[I can't change anyone even myself in any permanent way spiritually, but Christ in me and you, can do anything.]

Seeing Them Thinking Of Heaven. Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

[The greatest thing in all of life is knowing, loving, and serving God.]

Seeing Them Finding Sin Repulsive. Psalm 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

[The only way to grow is to increasingly flee sin by finding it repulsive.]

Seeing Them Responding To God. Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.

[Our goal is doing God's will, responding to Him, walking humbly before Him each day.]

PRAY FOR THOSE YOU LOVE

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