

# CONSECRATED LIFE



Kelicha Ochonogor

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**KELICHA  
OCHONOGOR**

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# CHAPTER **1**

## WHAT IS PRAYER



Prayer is often thought of as a way to communicate our needs, desires, and hopes to a higher power. While this is true, it's only one facet of the profound relationship that prayer can foster. Imagine prayer as a two-way conversation with the Divine—a connection that goes beyond words, where we not only speak but also listen, where we not only ask but also receive.

In a world filled with noise and distractions, prayer provides a unique space where we can truly commune with the Divine. It's not just about reciting words; it's about engaging our heart and soul in a conversation with God. Just as communication forms the

basis of any relationship, prayer serves as the channel for us to connect with the Creator of the universe.

Looking back through history, we find examples of individuals engaging in meaningful conversations with the Divine. From Abraham's intercession for Sodom to Moses' dialogues with God on Mount Sinai, these interactions weren't one-sided monologues but genuine exchanges that shaped destinies and nations.

Prayer isn't meant to be a one-way street where we simply voice our requests. Rather, it's an invitation to listen as well. Just as we share our hearts, God responds in ways we may not always expect. This two-way dynamic brings depth and richness to our relationship with the Divine, making prayer a profound exchange of love and understanding.

To truly engage in a two-way conversation with the Divine, we must cultivate the art of listening. Amidst the hustle and bustle of life, finding moments of silence and stillness allows us to attune our hearts to God's voice. Whether through nature, Scripture, or the gentle whispers within, God's response often comes as we open ourselves to receive.

While words play a significant role in prayer, they're not the only means of communication. Emotions, feelings, and even our silence can convey profound messages to the Divine. Just as a close friend understands our heart without us uttering a word, God comprehends the depths of our being, even when words fail us.

True dialogue involves vulnerability and authenticity. Surrendering our worries, doubts, and fears in prayer is an act of trust, allowing God to respond with guidance, comfort, and peace. This surrender deepens our relationship and transforms our conversations from mere ritual to soul-enriching exchanges.

The beauty of a two-way conversation with the Divine lies in its transformative power. As we engage in this dialogue, our

perspectives shift, our understanding deepens, and our lives are aligned with a higher purpose. Through prayer, we find healing, growth, and a sense of belonging that transcends the temporal.

In a world driven by technology and constant noise, carving out moments for meaningful conversation with the Divine becomes crucial. Balancing the demands of life with the necessity of prayer helps us maintain a continuous, authentic connection that enriches our soul and guides our steps.

Above all, a two-way conversation with the Divine offers us the precious gift of His presence. In our dialogues, we experience the nearness of God, a closeness that fills our hearts with a peace that surpasses all understanding.

In closing, let's embrace the fullness of prayer—a two-way conversation that transcends human limitations and draws us into the eternal embrace of the Divine. Through prayer, we not only share our hearts but also listen to the heartbeat of God. It's a symphony of love, a dance of understanding, and a transformative journey that leads us ever closer to the One who knows us intimately.

## **Reasons for prayer**

### God's Word Calls Us to Pray

One key reason to pray is because God has commanded us to pray. If we are to be obedient to His will, then prayer must be part of our life in Him. Where does the Bible call us to prayer? Several passages are relevant:

- *“Pray for those who persecute you”* -Matthew 5:44 (NIV)  
[1]
- *“And when you pray ...”* -Matthew 6:5

Prayer is an act of obedience. God calls us to pray and we must respond.

## 2. Jesus Prayed Regularly

Why did Jesus pray? One reason he prayed was as an example so that we could learn from him. The Gospels are full of references to the prayers of Christ, including these examples:

- *“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.”* -Matthew 14:23
- *“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’”* -Matthew 26:36

## 3. Prayer is How We Communicate with God

Prayer allows us to worship and praise the Lord. It also allows us to offer confession of our sins, which should lead to our genuine repentance. Moreover, prayer grants us the opportunity to present our requests to God. All of these aspects of prayer involve communication with our Creator. He is personal, cares for us, and wants to commune with us through prayer.

- *” ... if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”* -2 Chronicles 7:14

Prayer is not just about asking for God’s blessings – though we are welcome to do so – but it is about communication with the living God. Without communication, relationships fall apart. So, too, our relationship with God suffers when we do not communicate with Him.

## 4. Prayer allows us to participate in God’s Works

Does God need our help? No. He is all powerful and in control of everything in His creation. Why do we need to pray? Because prayer is the means God has ordained for some things to happen. Prayer, for instance, helps others know the love of Jesus. Prayer

can clear human obstacles out of the way in order for God to work. It is not that God can't work without our prayers, but that He has established prayer as part of His plan for accomplishing His will in this world.

#### 5. Prayer gives us Power over Evil

Can physical strength help us overcome obstacles and challenges in the spiritual realm? No, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:12). But in prayer even the physically weak can become strong in the spiritual realm. As such, we can call upon God to grant us power over evil.

- *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”* -1 Timothy 4:8
- *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”* – Matthew 26:41

#### 6. Prayer keeps us Humble before God

Humility is a virtue God desires in us (Proverbs 11:2; 22:4; Micah 6:8; Ephesians 4:2; James 4:10). Prayer reminds us that we are not in control, but God is, thus keeping us from pride.

- *“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* -Matthew 18:4

#### 7. Prayer Grants us the Privilege of Experiencing God

Through prayer we obtain an experiential basis for our faith. We do not ignore the intellect or reasons for faith, but prayer makes our experience of God real on an emotional level.

#### 8. Prayer Strengthens the Bonds Between Believers

Prayer not only strengthens our relationship with God, but when we pray with other believers, prayer also strengthens the bonds between fellow Christians.

#### 9.. Prayer Can Succeed Where Other Means Have Failed

Have all your options been exhausted? Prayer can succeed where other means have failed. Prayer should not be a last resort, but our first response. But there are times when sincere prayer must be offered in order to accomplish something.

#### 10. Answered Prayer is a Potential Witness

If our prayer is answered, it can serve as a potential witness for those who doubt.

# CHAPTER 2

## PRAYER MANNER

Prayer is more than just words; it's a sacred conversation between you and the Divine. Just as communication with a loved one requires thoughtful words, gestures, and tones, prayer also involves a specific manner that enhances the connection with God.

As we embark on a journey to understand the intricacies of prayer manner, we begin with a foundational principle that sets the tone for our approach to the Divine. Humility, often described as a virtue of profound importance, serves as the cornerstone of an effective and transformative prayer manner. In this chapter, we will explore why humility is crucial and how it shapes our connection with God.

At the core of humility lies a heart that acknowledges its dependence on a higher power. In prayer, humility involves recognizing our limitations and surrendering our prideful desires to God's wisdom and will. It is an admission that we need divine guidance, grace, and intervention beyond our own capabilities.

Humility is nurtured when we reflect on our human frailty and imperfections. When we approach God with humility, we acknowledge that we are not self-sufficient but are in constant need of His mercy and assistance. This recognition humbles us before His greatness and magnifies His sovereignty.

Humility removes the barriers that pride erects between us and God. When we humbly approach Him, we invite intimacy into

our prayers. Our vulnerability and willingness to acknowledge our weaknesses create a safe space for God to draw close and reveal His heart to us.

Humble prayer aligns our desires with God's purposes. Instead of insisting on our own plans, we submit to His divine plan. Humility transforms our prayers from self-centered petitions to requests that seek His will above all else. As we pray with humility, we recognize that God's wisdom far surpasses our own.

To cultivate humility in our prayer manner, it's essential to spend time in stillness and reflection. By taking moments to ponder our weaknesses and the vastness of God's greatness, we're reminded of the need for humility.

Gratitude is a powerful expression of humility. When we recognize God's blessings in our lives, we acknowledge that everything we have comes from Him. Gratitude dismantles the prideful notion of self-sufficiency.

Pride can infiltrate even our prayers, leading us to believe that our words or deeds make us more righteous. To overcome this, we must continually remind ourselves of our need for God's grace and remain vigilant against spiritual arrogance.

Jesus serves as the ultimate model of humility in prayer. His willingness to submit to the Father's will, even in the face of suffering, teaches us the beauty of humility in our own prayer manner.

Understanding the importance of humility as the foundation of our prayer manner transforms the way we approach God. It opens doors to intimacy, aligns our hearts with His purposes, and guards us against the dangers of pride. As we cultivate humility in our prayers, we create a fertile ground for authentic connection with the Divine.

## **Open Honesty**

At the heart of open honesty is vulnerability. When we share our true selves with God, we strip away pretense and facade. We express our fears, doubts, joys, and sorrows without inhibition, allowing a genuine connection to form between us and the Divine.

Honesty in prayer paves the way for healing. As we bring our brokenness before God, we invite His transformative touch. Acknowledging our struggles and weaknesses allows Him to work in the depths of our hearts, bringing restoration and wholeness.

## **Specific Requests - The Power of Clarity**

Specificity in prayer is about moving beyond vague or general requests. When we clearly articulate our needs and desires, we demonstrate our trust in God's ability to understand and address our unique situations.

Specific requests align our hearts with God's will. As we present our desires before Him, we surrender them to His wisdom and sovereignty. Our faith is refined as we learn to accept His response, whether it aligns with our expectations or not.

## **Cultivating Gratefulness**

Cultivating gratefulness involves recognizing God's goodness in every aspect of our lives. Gratitude acknowledges His provision, protection, and presence, infusing our prayers with a sense of awe and appreciation.

Gratitude is a catalyst for spiritual growth. When we approach God with a thankful heart, we create a positive atmosphere for His work in our lives. Gratefulness fosters contentment and a deepening awareness of His faithfulness.

## **Thanking for Past Blessings**

Thanking God for past blessings is a testament to His faithfulness. Celebrating answered prayers reinforces our trust in His providence and strengthens our bond with Him.

Reflecting on past blessings anchors us in hope for the future. When challenges arise, we can look back on God's faithfulness and find the courage to continue trusting Him.

## **Embracing Silence**

Silence in prayer is a language that transcends words. It invites us to simply be in the presence of God, allowing Him to speak to us in ways beyond human comprehension.

In the quietness of silence, we listen for God's gentle whisper. Embracing silence in our prayer manner opens the door for divine revelations and deeper communion with the Divine.

## **Journaling as Expression**

Journaling provides a space to capture the moments of divine encounter during prayer. Through written words, we document our conversations with God and His responses.

Journaling serves as a reflective tool for spiritual growth. Looking back on past entries, we witness the progress of our faith journey, the lessons learned, and the prayers answered.

Open honesty and specific requests infuse depth and clarity into your prayer manner. Cultivating gratefulness and embracing silence, while also journaling as an expression, elevate the prayer experience to new heights. By embracing these practices, you open doors to a more profound, transformative, and intimate connection with the Divine.

# CHAPTER 3

## TYPES OF PRAYERS

Prayer is one of the most intimate ways we can connect to God. In prayer we share our feelings, our thoughts, our deepest concerns and fears, and what we are most grateful for in life. When we spend time in prayer, we hear from God and make space for the Spirit to guide our steps and transform our hearts. Scripture teaches that God is truly just a prayer away, and what a privilege it is for us to be so close to God.

One fascinating feature of prayer is that it is unique between every person and God. No one prays quite the same. Each of us may find ourselves praying in a different way depending on the situation, the need, or what we have to say to God. You may wonder how many different types of prayers there are. We can look to Scripture to discover at least ten notable kinds of prayers.

When we talk to someone we care about, we use different words and tones depending on what we want to say. Similarly, when we talk to God, we use different types of prayers to express our feelings, thoughts, and needs. Each type of prayer is like a special way of talking to our Heavenly Father.

The Bible is full of robust prayers that are said for a variety of reasons and circumstances. We get amazing glimpses of vibrant prayer lives in individuals and communities throughout God's word.

Prayer is powerful, it is intimate, and it changes the hearts of those who pray regularly by drawing us closer to God. There are

many types of prayers and we find evidence of this in the Bible. Some prayers may be motivated by a need for healing, help, or a grateful heart. Other prayers are a result of considering and declaring the grandiosity of God

Whatever the kind of prayer we bring to God, what's most important is that we make prayer a priority because it is how we fellowship with God and develop a personal relationship with him.

Think of each type of prayer as a unique way of conversing with our Heavenly Father, creating a deeper and more meaningful connection with Him.

### **Adoration and Worship:**

In the vast landscape of prayer, there exists a sacred realm where words become melodies of reverence, and hearts resonate with awe. This realm is none other than the realm of adoration and worship. It's a place where we lift our voices and hearts to extol the greatness of the Divine with a profound sense of humility and wonder.

#### **1. Prayer of Adoration**

This type of prayer is focused on worshiping the Lord out of deep love, respect, and admiration. These prayers come from a place of genuine awe of who the Lord is and all that he does.

*“Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens”* (Psalm 148:13).

#### **2. Prayer of Thanksgiving**

For some, beginning each day with a prayer of thanksgiving is a habit they practice. Prayers of gratitude are prompted by an answered prayer, deliverance, recognition of how good and

merciful God is, or simply because we have been given another day of life.

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Cry out, ‘Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise’”* (1 Chronicles 16:34-35).

### **3. Prayer of Confession**

Confessing our sins is a significant way to pray as followers of Jesus. Often, Jesus called those he interacted with to confess their sins and sin no more. In the Bible, we get a glimpse of confession prayers and many reminders that God forgives those who confess their sins.

*“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin”* (Psalm 32:5).

### **4. Prayer of Vows**

Praying a promise to the Lord is a prayer that we may pray when we are making a life-changing commitment that we need God’s strength, guidance, and help to fulfill. Perhaps we vow to the Lord never to drink alcohol, or to abstain from premarital sex, or to live in a certain righteous way that is pleasing to the Lord. A pledge to God, just as we see in Hannah’s vow, should be followed through, and made with great consideration and certainty.

*“In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, ‘Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head’”* (1 Samuel 1:10-11).

### **5. Prayer of Quiet Reflection**

Prayers of silence draw us away from prayers filled with words, and into a place where we quiet ourselves down and reflect. These types of silent prayers provide us needed time to reflect on God's goodness. This type of prayer is valuable to how we learn to hear from the Lord and allow him to guide our steps.

*"On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night"* (Psalm 63:6).

## **6. Prayer for Healing**

A prayer for healing is usually spoken when we seek restoration for our physical bodies, spiritual wholeness, or emotional wounds. A key component of Jesus' earthly ministry was healing those who were physically ill. The Bible affirms that we can come to God asking for all types of healing.

*"Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise"* (Jeremiah 17:14).

## **8. Prayer of Intercession**

Praying for others is a crucial part of being part of the body of Christ. The Bible instructs us to pray for one another and to intercede on someone else's behalf. In the Gospels, we read that Jesus prayed for others in his final hours before being arrested. The apostle Paul wrote of how he often kept other Christians and new believers in his prayers, as well.

*"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light"* (Colossians 1:9-12).

## **A Prayer for Every Need**

Prayer is conversation with God and that conversation may differ when it comes to the motivation, meaning, and purpose. Hence, we find there are a variety of prayers in the Bible. Perhaps you have experienced in your own prayer time with God that you have used many types of the prayers similar to those listed above. We can look to the Bible to learn how to pray, to develop our prayer lives, and to allow prayer to nourish our relationship with Jesus.

### **What is fasting?**

Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline. Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform your life. And the practice of fasting has strong roots in the Bible. Jesus himself spent time in fasting and prayer during his life on earth, and he expected his followers to fast as well. Most commonly, fasting is when you abstain from food or a certain type of food for a period of time.

However, there are multiple ways to fast, all with the potential to help you grow spiritually.

It's important to ensure you're listening to both the Holy Spirit and your own body in the way you fast. Instead of abstaining from food altogether, you may fast from a particular type of food or even something other than food, such as social media. You might decide to fast until a certain time in the day or skip a certain meal. There are many ways to ensure you're getting the physical nourishment you need while still enjoying the spiritual nourishment fasting and prayer offer.

Fasting and prayer can also bring about more than just personal transformation. When God's people practice fasting and prayer, God hears from heaven and can heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nations, and our world. Fasting and prayer can even bring about revival—a change in direction.

## **Fasting in the Bible**

Fasting was an expected spiritual discipline in both the Old and New Testament. In fact, we see examples of fasting in the Bible from several significant biblical figures. Moses, for example, fasted at least two recorded 40-day periods (Deuteronomy 9:18-19, Exodus 34:28). Jesus also fasted for 40 days and nights (Matthew 4:2).

If 40 days seems like an impossible amount of time to survive without sustenance, that's because without divine intervention, it is. (Humans can only last about three days without water.) But biblical fasting didn't usually mean going without food or drink 24/7. The Jewish custom was to fast during the day but eat and drink as soon as it was dark.

Jesus encouraged in his followers an intentional approach to fasting as a spiritual tool, not a biblical law. When a Pharisee questioned Jesus about why his disciples weren't fasting like the Pharisees, he offered his own guidance on the role of fasting. Comparing his disciples to guests at a wedding, Jesus said, "*The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast*" (Matthew 9:14-16). This guidance can still apply to us today. When we feel far from God, fasting can help us mourn our distance from God and draw closer once again.

### **Why should you fast?**

According to Dr. Bill Bright, who produced a guide to fasting for cru.org, there are a number of reasons why the practice of fasting can be spiritually beneficial.

- Fasting is biblical. We see examples of biblical fasting in the lives of figures like Moses, Jesus, and King David.

- Fasting and prayer can restore or strengthen your intimacy with God. Many longtime Christians find that fasting helps them rediscover their “first love” for God again.
- Fasting is a way to humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, “*I humbled my soul with fasting*” (Psalm 69:10). You may find yourself relying on God more fully for strength when you fast.
- Fasting and prayer can help us hear God more clearly. To listen to God as you fast, consider combining a time of fasting with a practice of listening to prayer. Together, fasting and prayer can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience of God.
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition. When you see your own brokenness more clearly, you’re able to move toward repentance.
- When you experience revival in your own life through fasting, the grace and love of God can shine through you into the lives of others.

### **Types of fasting**

According to pastor and author Sam Storms, there are several different types of fasting from food or drink you can try.

**Regular fast:** A regular fast is when you abstain from all food and drink except for water (Matthew 4:2)

**Partial fast:** This is a type of fasting that involves abstaining from a particular type of food. Daniel’s diet while he was in Babylon is an example (Daniel 10:3). One popular type of partial fast is a liquid fast, removing certain types of drinks from your diet. This might include alcohol, caffeine, or soda. Another form of partial fast is abstaining from one particular meal each day.

Absolute fast: An absolute fast is when you abstain from food and drink of any kind. You should only do this for a short period of time. Going longer than three days without eating or drinking can be dangerous.

Supernatural fast: There have been instances when God enabled someone to fast in ways that they could not do on their own. Moses abstaining from food and water for 40 days (Deuteronomy 9:9) is an example of this type of fasting in the Bible.

### **Spiritual preparation for fasting and prayer**

In preparation for this special time with God, [cru.org](http://cru.org)'s guide to fasting urges that you examine your heart. Ask God to help you see your brokenness clearly so that you can confess your sins and repent. In Scripture, God frequently calls upon people to repent of their sins before listening to their prayers.

You can look to King David's example in Psalm 66:16-20:

*"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me.*

*I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue.*

*If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

*But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer.*

*Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me."*

In your prayers, confess not only obvious sins, but less obvious ones as well. Acknowledge the sins of omission (the right actions you haven't taken) as well as the sins of commission (the wrong things you've done). What is standing in the way of your relationship with God? What is holding you back from living and loving like Jesus? It might be self-centeredness, spiritual

indifference, an unwillingness to share your faith with others, putting time spent in prayer and study of God's Word low on your priority list, or struggling to love your neighbors and treat them with kindness. Confess your shortcomings and ask God to work in your heart during this time of prayer and fasting.

Your motive in fasting should ultimately be to glorify God, not to have an emotional experience or attain personal happiness. God will honor your seeking spirit. As you spend time in fasting and prayer, God will shape your heart and draw you closer to Christ.

### **How to fast safely**

Fasting can be practiced safely. However, as you begin a time of fasting and prayer, friends and family may express concerns about how fasting could impact your health. And they are right to encourage you to safeguard your health. It may be a good idea to consult with your doctor before you begin a time of fasting and prayer. If you struggle with certain medical conditions, such as an eating disorder or being chronically underweight, you should not fast without the supervision of a health professional. In some cases, fasting from something other than food may be a better option.

But when practiced properly, fasting can be both a spiritual and physical blessing. In fact, a growing number of people have begun to practice intermittent fasting for its dietary benefits.

### **Safe fasting tips and guidelines:**

- Fasting until a specific time of day or skipping a specific meal each day is safer and more sustainable than a complete fast. For a fast that will be longer than 1-3 days, this is often a good option.
- Consider fasting from a specific type of food instead of all food, especially if you want to fast for a long period of time or have health concerns.

- A complete fast should be very short; it should not last longer than a few days.
- Do not abstain from drinking water for long and only do so under your doctor's supervision. The effects of dehydration are serious, and your body may begin to experience them more quickly than the effects of hunger.
- If fasting from food or drink isn't a good option for you, you can still practice fasting. Choose something else in your life to fast from instead. For example, consider fasting from TV or social media.

### **God's Word.**

A child needs milk to start with, but he needs solid food later on. The Bible contains both milk and solid food. The milk is called "the elementary teaching about the Christ" (Heb. 6:1); and the solid food is called "the word of righteousness" (Heb. 5:13). How soon we move on to solid food, depends on how quickly we obey any light that God gives us. Our spiritual growth is dependent on faith and obedience. God has given us promises in His Word so that we can trust Him. He has also given us commands to obey. If we meditate on God's Word regularly and trust and obey Him we will find that we are deeply rooted in God, like an evergreen tree that never withers.

God will then be able to bless us in such a way that we prosper in everything we do (Psa. 1:2,3). We can't understand God's Word by intellectual study alone. We need the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that spiritual truths were hidden from the clever and the intelligent and revealed to babes (Mt. 11:25). What do babes have, that clever, intelligent people don't have? A pure heart! God looks at the heart and not at the head. He gives revelation to those who are humble and who tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2). Jesus said that only those who were willing to do the will of God would understand God's Word (Jn.7:17).

God's Word is also the weapon that we use in our warfare against Satan. It is called "the sword of the Spirit" in Ephesians 6:17. Jesus Himself used this weapon with great effect, during the last three temptations in the wilderness. Each time, he countered Satan's temptations with "It is written..." (Matt. 4:4,7,10). That's how He overcame; and that's how we can overcome too. Satan is the Accuser. We must distinguish between his accusations and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Satan always seeks to harass us and make us feel condemned by his accusations.

The Holy Spirit's conviction, on the other hand, is always gentle and full of hope. We can overcome the Accuser only by "the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony" (Rev. 12:11). His accusations concerning our past sins can be overcome only as we give him our testimony that the blood of Christ has cleansed us and justified us thoroughly. We have to use the same weapon that Jesus used: "*It is written...*" Confessing God's Word to Satan is the way to overcome not only Satan's accusations, but also discouragement and anxiety and a host of other temptations with which Satan assails our mind. That's why it is important to know God's Word well, so that the Holy Spirit can bring to our mind the right Scripture at the time of our need. It is good therefore to have a time every day when we meditate on God's Word asking Him to speak to us. As we hide God's Word in our heart, it will keep us from sinning against Him (Psa. 119:11).

### **Prayer.**

Communication with God is a two-way matter. We hear God speaking to us through His Word first. And then we speak to Him. But prayer is not just making requests to God. A primary part of prayer should be having fellowship with God, like a bride with her bridegroom. There are no rules on how a bride should speak to her bridegroom. But as a discipline, it's good for our prayers to consist of: (i) praise to our Father for Who He is; (ii) confession of sin and failure; (iii) petitions concerning the kingdom of God;

(iv) petitions concerning our own needs; (v) intercession for the needs of others; (vi) thanksgiving for what God has done; and (vii) thanksgiving for what God will do. Jesus told us to "pray at all times" (Lk. 18:1). A good habit to develop is to learn to speak to God about the little things of daily life - and thus to be in a spirit of prayer throughout the day. Thus, speaking to God will become a joy for us and not a ritual. We'll also find that God speaks to us in our hearts in surprising ways. But these are just the kindergarten-lessons in the school of prayer. We can progress further if we are faithful. In any case, prayer should never be allowed to degenerate into a dry, empty ritual. Prayer is like breathing. When our breathing becomes difficult for us, then we know that something is wrong! Prayer was never meant by God to be dry or boring. But as we progress, we will find that prayer becomes hard work. If we are faithful with the little burdens God lays on our heart to pray about, we'll find that God gives us more and more of His burdens. Thus we can become co-workers with God, in His work of blessing others. Jesus prayed 'with loud crying and tears' (Heb. 5:7).

Once when He prayed in Gethsemane, His sweat became like great drops of blood (Lk. 22:44). His praying was so intense. Once He spent a whole night in prayer (Lk. 6:12). He had a habit of slipping off frequently into the wilderness to pray (Lk. 5:16). As someone has said "Like tourists look for sights to see, whenever they come to a new place, Jesus always looked for a quiet place to pray wherever He went." Jesus' example shows us how important prayer is. If He needed to pray so much, how much more you and I need to. Fight the battle against laziness then, and determine to be a man/woman of prayer at any cost.

Have you ever prayed and didn't see results? I believe the Bible teaches that God always answers our prayers. Sometime His answer is "yes" and we see His visible provision. Sometimes His answer is "no" because our prayers are not aligned with His plans. Sometimes His answer is "not yet" because the timing is not right

to answer that prayer. But in every case, your Heavenly Father answers prayer.

There are, however, some things that can hinder your prayers from being answered. These things restrict your prayers and render them ineffective:

# CHAPTER 4

## WHAT HINDERS YOUR ANSWERED PRAYERS?



### 1. Wrong motives

“And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong — you want only what will give you pleasure,”(James 4.3 NLT).

### 2. Secret sin

“If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened,”(Psalm 66.18 NLT).

### **3. Dishonoring relationships**

“In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered,”(1 Peter 3.7 NLT).

### **4. Idols in our hearts**

“Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts. They have embraced things that will make them fall into sin. Why should I listen to their requests?,”(Ezekiel 14.3 NLT).

### **5. Lack of faith**

“He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith,”(Mark 6.5-6 NIV).

### **6. Lack of forgiveness**

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you,”(Matthew 6.14-15 NLT).

**Here are 5 sobering results of prayerlessness.**

#### **1. Increased Stress**

When we pray, we cast our worries and burdens on God. Prayer requires that we recognize our need for God and choose to depend on Him.

However, when we don’t pray, we end up carrying our burdens alone. This causes us to experience increased stress and anxiety.

#### **2. Lack of Desire for God**

Prayer is the vital communication between us and our Saviour. The more we pray, the more we want to pray. This is a good and healthy desire for a Christian to have.

However, when we stop praying, our hearts grow cold toward God. We lose our desire to pray and read His Word.

What is the cure for this problem? Start praying!

### **3. Loss of Joy**

As Christians, we experience joy in our relationship with God. One of the primary sources of joy is talking to God in prayer and listening to His voice. However, if we're not talking to Him, we can't enjoy Him.

Not talking to God is often a symptom of a deeper problem. It could be bitterness or unconfessed sin. No matter what it is, we need to deal with it. Like the songwriter of old, we need to be able to say, "*Nothing between my soul and the Saviour...*" (Charles Tindley, 1851-1933)

### **4. Focus on Temporary Things**

If we aren't praying, we tend to forget what's really important in life. Instead of seeking God's kingdom first, we chase after money, success, and pleasure. But, at the end of the day, we are left with sand slipping through our fingers...nothing to show for our efforts.

In Colossians 3:2, Paul challenges us, "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*" We need to love God, love people, and live for eternity.

### **5. Lack of Witnessing**

Without prayer, we lose our boldness in witnessing...and sometimes even our desire to share the Gospel. We become fearful and afraid to speak up. God help us to witness as we should!

If you are struggling to witness to others, start by praying. Ask God to give you the boldness, the opportunities, and the words to

share His Gospel. At our church in Sydney, we want to share the good news that Jesus saves!

- The danger of prayerlessness lies in the gradual separation it fosters between the individual and the Divine. When we neglect prayer, we create distance from our source of guidance, comfort, and wisdom.
- Scriptures: Psalm 51:11, Isaiah 59:2.

### **Lost Spiritual Nourishment**

- Prayer is like spiritual nourishment for the soul. Prayerlessness leaves us spiritually malnourished and weak, unable to face life's challenges with resilience.
- Scriptures: Matthew 4:4, Psalm 34:10.

### **Carrying Burdens Alone**

- Without prayer, we carry the weight of our worries, fears, and burdens on our shoulders. This can lead to overwhelming anxiety and stress.
- Scriptures: 1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 11:28-30.

### **Missing the Peace of God**

- Prayerlessness denies us the peace that surpasses understanding. Instead, we are left with a restless heart and a troubled mind.
- Scriptures: Philippians 4:6-7, John 14:27.

### **Vulnerability to Temptation**

- Without the armor of prayer, we become vulnerable to the temptations and schemes of the adversary.
- Scriptures: Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Peter 5:8.

## **A Lack of Discernment**

- Prayerlessness hinders our ability to discern the spiritual battles around us. We may be unable to recognize God's guidance and protection.
- Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 John 4:1.

## **Missed Opportunities for Growth**

- Prayer is a means of spiritual growth and maturity. Without it, we miss out on opportunities to deepen our faith and relationship with God.
- Scriptures: Colossians 1:9-10, 2 Peter 3:18.

## **Spiritual Dryness**

- Prayerlessness often leads to spiritual dryness and a sense of emptiness in one's faith journey.
- Scriptures: Psalm 63:1-2, Isaiah 44:3.

## **Unawareness of God's Will**

- Prayer is a channel through which we seek and discern God's will. Without it, we may stumble in the darkness, unaware of His direction.
- Scriptures: Romans 12:2, James 1:5.

## **Missed Divine Appointments**

- Prayerlessness can result in missed opportunities and divine appointments that God orchestrates for our benefit and the advancement of His kingdom.
- Scriptures: Esther 4:14, Acts 9:10-16.

## **Weakened Relationships**

- The absence of prayer can strain relationships, as it may lead to a lack of patience, forgiveness, and understanding in our interactions with others.
- Scriptures: Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13.

## **A Missed Opportunity for Unity**

- Without prayer, the unity and strength of communities and families can be compromised, hindering collective growth and support.
- Scriptures: Psalm 133:1, Acts 2:42.

## **Ineffectiveness in Kingdom Work**

- Prayerlessness can hinder the effectiveness of one's efforts in advancing God's kingdom, as it neglects the essential foundation of seeking His guidance and empowerment.
- Scriptures: John 15:5, Zechariah 4:6.

## **Missed Opportunities for Witness**

- Prayer is vital for effective witness and outreach. Prayerlessness can result in missed opportunities to share the gospel and impact lives.
- Scriptures: Matthew 9:37-38, Acts 1:8.

## **A Call to Prayerful Restoration**

- Despite the dangers of prayerlessness, there is hope. This chapter encourages a return to a life of fervent and consistent prayer, highlighting the transformative power of reconnecting with God.
- Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 7:14, James 4:8.

In conclusion, prayerlessness is not merely the absence of prayer; it brings with it a host of dangers that can affect every aspect of our lives. Recognizing these perils serves as a powerful motivator to cultivate a life steeped in prayer, where we draw near to the Divine, find strength, guidance, and transformation, and experience the abundant life God intends for us.

# CHAPTER 5

## STANDING IN THE GAP



*“I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one. So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them with the fire of my anger. I will heap on their heads the full penalty for all their sins. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!” (Ezekiel 22:30-31).*

To stand in the gap, in the context of this message, is to intercede on someone’s behalf in prayer. Jesus is the intercessor for those

who believe in Him. He is the one standing in the gap for us before God. He makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

The writer of the book of Hebrews says Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus has entered into heaven to appear in the presence of God for those who believe in Him (Hebrews 9:24). He is their high priest.

1 John 2:1 says we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He pleads our case before the Father. Someone standing in the gap does a similar thing. He pleads someone's case on his behalf before God.

The followers of Christ need to stand in the gap for others, especially their spouses, children, families, loved ones, and those who may need their intercession.

We may know the issue for which to stand in the gap for someone. Sometimes we may not know the reason other than the fact that we have a burden to intercede for them. In this case, we have to pray in the Spirit, more than at any other time, to be able to pray right.

Romans 8:26-27 says, *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God”*

Our standing in the gap may be because of a revelation we've heard, a request for it, or a particular issue that we know about the person. It may be with or without fasting. Faithfulness, selflessness, and persistence are requirements to effectively stand in the gap.

There are records of great interventions by God on earth because of the faithful intercession of some people. They stood in the gap and their intercession provoked God's intervention.

We may never know the effects of the failure of people in the contemporary world to stand in the gap for others. When there were situations that called for intervention or when God gave them a burden to intercede but they did not respond, it had repercussions on the people.

The failure of such people will be like the situation recorded in the book of Ezekiel when God sought an intercessor but found none. *"I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one. So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them with the fire of my anger. I will heap on their heads the full penalty for all their sins. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!"* (Ezekiel 22:30-31).

May you not fail God or those He has raised you or prompted you to stand in the gap for.

Some examples of people in the Bible who stood in the gap

1. Abraham stood in the gap for Sodom and Gomorrah. This is recorded in Genesis 18:16-33. The case of Sodom and Gomorrah was not like the situation recorded in Isaiah 59:16, which I referred to earlier, when God found no intercessor or no one to intervene or help the people of Judah.

Sodom and Gomorrah had an intercessor but they fell short of his expectation. Abraham thought there would be ten righteous people in that city; and therefore, asked God not to destroy the city if He could find this number. He never knew that the city was so sinful that there would not be ten righteous persons there.

2. Moses and Aaron stood in the gap to avert the destruction of Israelites because of the sin of Dathan, Korah, and Abiram in Numbers 16:1-3. In Numbers 16:22, Moses and Aaron interceded that God would not be angry with the congregation because of one man's sin. The LORD responded and asked the congregation to get away from the tents of the three rebels.

3. Moses stood in the gap in prayer for the Israelites for their idolatry, and for Aaron, who had made a golden calf for the people thereby leading them into idolatry (Exodus 32:30-35; Deuteronomy 9:18-21; Psalm 106:23). If Moses had not stood in the gap, the punishment would have been more severe than it was. His intercession saved Aaron's life during the plague the LORD sent upon the Israelites as punishment.

Moses also stood in the gap for his sister, Miriam, who became leprous for challenging his leadership. God refused to hear Moses' prayer to heal her. He insisted that Miriam must be punished for her sin for seven days (Numbers 12:10-15).

In Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; and 14:11-12, God equally forbade Jeremiah from continuing to stand in the gap for the people of Judah because of their persistent sin of idolatry, among others. The LORD was angry with them and had made up His mind to punish them.

He said in Jeremiah 15:1 that even if Moses and Samuel stood before Him to intercede for them, He wouldn't help them. These two people were great prophets of God and intercessors.

The people of Judah had really sinned against the LORD and made Him extremely angry.

According to the Prophet Eli in 1 Samuel 2:25a, *"If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?"* Repent of your sins that could make God not listen to the intercession for you.

4. Samuel stood in the gap in prayer for the Israelites. He said in 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 I will teach you the good and the right way”* (New King James Version).

5. The vine keeper or gardener stood in the gap for the fig tree. If the vine keeper (Jesus Christ) had not stood in the gap, the owner of the vineyard (God) would have cut down the fig tree (the nation of Israel/the Christian) for its unfruitfulness. But the vine keeper successfully pleaded for a final chance – another year (Luke 13:6-9).

6. Paul stood in the gap for the church. Paul talked about his prayer for the churches of Colosse and Thessalonica (Colossians 1:9-14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

Who are you standing in the gap for? Can God trust you to faithfully stand in the gap for your spouse, family, loved ones, friends, church members, congregation, pastor, or any other person He may give you a prayer burden for?

### **Benefits of standing in the gap**

1. You turn away the wrath of God or avert His judgment.
2. You provoke the mercy of God and divine intervention.
3. You prevent a bad dream or revelation from coming to pass.
4. You experience the personal joy of answered prayer for others. You feel glad that God could use you to bring about a positive change or avert evil.
5. You sow a seed, which you’ll reap later (Galatians 6:7). When you stand in the gap for others, God will cause others to stand in the gap for you, too, when there’s a need for it.

## **The Dynamics of Faith**

The Essence of Faith is the foundation upon which our spiritual journey is built. It's not merely a static belief but a dynamic force that shapes our lives. In this exploration, we will delve into the multifaceted dynamics of faith, understanding how it operates, grows, and transforms us on our spiritual path.

The Nature of Faith Understanding how faith provides a deep sense of assurance in the unseen. Scriptures: Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Hebrews 11:1 is a well-known verse from the New Testament of the Bible that provides a concise definition of faith: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." This verse offers profound insights into the nature and significance of faith in the lives of believers. Let's break it down and provide a full explanation:

Faith Defined: The verse begins with the statement, "Now faith is..." This sets the stage for the explanation of what faith entails. Faith, in this context, is not merely belief or intellectual assent; it is a deep and active confidence.

- **Confidence in What We Hope for:** Faith involves having confidence in something we hope for. Hope is an essential component of faith. It implies a future-oriented expectation or desire. Faith enables believers to maintain confidence in the realization of their hopes, even when circumstances may seem unfavorable or when they cannot yet see the fulfillment of their desires.
- **Assurance About What We Do Not See:** Faith is also described as assurance about what we do not see. This aspect of faith highlights its transcendence beyond empirical evidence or sensory perception. In essence, faith provides believers with a sense of certainty or conviction regarding things that are not

immediately visible or provable. It's the ability to trust in the existence of spiritual realities, God's promises, and the unseen realm.

- **Examples of Faith:** The subsequent verses in Hebrews 11 provide a series of examples of individuals from the Bible who demonstrated faith in action. These heroes of faith, including Abraham, Noah, and Moses, trusted God's promises and acted on their faith, often in the face of great challenges and uncertainties.
- **The Role of Faith in the Believer's Life:** Faith is foundational in the Christian worldview. It is the means by which believers connect with God and His promises. Faith is often described as the key to salvation, as it involves trusting in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and eternal life.
- **Living by Faith:** The concept of "living by faith" is a recurring theme in the Bible. It means that believers are called to walk through life with trust and confidence in God, relying on His guidance, provision, and wisdom even when they cannot see the full scope of His plan.
- **Strengthening Faith:** Faith is not stagnant; it can grow and be strengthened through prayer, reading the Scriptures, fellowship with other believers, and personal experiences of God's faithfulness. Believers are encouraged to nurture and deepen their faith continually.

Hebrews 11:1 encapsulates the essence of faith in the Christian context. It is a confident trust in the fulfillment of hoped-for promises and an unwavering conviction about spiritual realities and truths that are beyond the scope of our physical senses. Faith plays a central role in the lives of believers, enabling them to live in relationship with God and navigate life's challenges with assurance and hope.

## **Trusting in Divine Promises**

Exploring faith as trust in the promises of God and His unwavering faithfulness.

Scriptures: Romans 4:20-21 - *"Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised."*

Trusting in Divine Promises is a fundamental aspect of faith for many believers. It involves a deep and unwavering trust in the promises of God as revealed in sacred texts, such as the Bible, and as experienced in personal encounters with the divine. This trust in God's promises is closely linked to the understanding of God's unwavering faithfulness.

The Nature of Divine Promises: Divine promises are assurances or declarations made by God in which He commits to certain actions or outcomes. These promises are often found throughout religious texts like the Bible and are considered by believers to be a reflection of God's character and His intention to guide, bless, and care for His people.

Examples of Divine Promises: The Bible is replete with examples of divine promises. For instance, God promised Noah never to flood the earth again (Genesis 9:11), assured Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5), and gave the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Trusting in Divine Promises: Trusting in divine promises means having faith and confidence that God will fulfill what He has declared. It requires believing that God is both willing and able to keep His word, even when circumstances seem contrary. This trust is not merely intellectual; it is deeply rooted in the heart and soul of the believer.

**The Role of Faith:** Faith is the conduit through which individuals trust in divine promises. It involves an unwavering belief in the trustworthiness of God and His word. Faith enables believers to lay hold of God's promises and live in accordance with them.

**God's Unwavering Faithfulness:** God's faithfulness is a central attribute emphasized in many religious traditions. It signifies His steadfast commitment to fulfilling His promises. The Bible often speaks of God as being faithful and true (1 Corinthians 1:9), and many believers find solace in the assurance that God will not fail them.

**Personal Experience:** Many believers can point to personal experiences where they have seen God's faithfulness in action. These experiences serve as tangible evidence of God's reliability and reinforce their trust in His promises.

**Strengthening Trust:** Trust in divine promises can be strengthened through prayer, meditation on scripture, and reflecting on past instances of God's faithfulness. Additionally, the support of a faith community can provide encouragement and a sense of shared faith.

**Navigating Challenges:** Trusting in divine promises doesn't mean a life free from difficulties. In fact, challenges and trials often test one's faith. However, believers rely on their trust in God's promises to navigate these challenges with hope and perseverance.

In summary, trusting in divine promises is a cornerstone of faith for many believers. It involves a deep and unwavering confidence in God's faithfulness and His commitment to fulfilling His declarations. This trust in God's promises serves as a source of comfort, guidance, and strength as individuals journey in their faith and seek to live in alignment with God's will.

## **Believing Beyond Circumstances**

- Understanding how faith goes beyond circumstances, anchoring us in God's truth.
- Scriptures: Mark 11:24 - "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Faith's ability to go beyond circumstances and anchor us in God's truth is a fundamental aspect of religious and spiritual belief systems. It involves a deep and unwavering trust in God's character, His promises, and His ultimate plan, even when the circumstances of life are challenging or seem contradictory. Here's a closer look at how faith transcends circumstances and provides a firm foundation in God's truth:

- **Belief in the Unseen:** Faith is often described as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). This means that faith allows individuals to believe in and trust things that are not immediately apparent or visible in the physical world. It goes beyond empirical evidence and relies on the spiritual and unseen realm.
- **Trust in God's Character:** Faith is intimately tied to trust in God's character. Believers have confidence in the goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness of God, regardless of what is happening in their lives. They trust that God's nature remains unchanged by external circumstances.
- **Anchoring in God's Word:** Many faith traditions have sacred texts, such as the Bible, Quran, or other religious scriptures, that provide a source of divine truth and guidance. Faith involves anchoring oneself in the teachings and promises contained in these texts, believing them to be God's revealed truth.

- **God's Sovereignty:** Faith recognizes that God is sovereign, meaning He is in control of all things. Even in the face of adversity or uncertainty, faith acknowledges that God's overarching plan and purpose will ultimately prevail.
- **Peace Amidst Storms:** Faith doesn't guarantee a life free from difficulties, but it provides a sense of peace and security in the midst of life's storms. Believers can find comfort in the knowledge that God is with them and is working all things together for good (Romans 8:28).
- **Hope in God's Promises:** Faith is closely tied to hope in God's promises. Believers trust that God will fulfill His promises, which often include blessings, redemption, and eternal life. This hope sustains them through challenges and trials.
- **Prayer and Communion:** Faith is nurtured through prayer and communion with God. In these moments of spiritual connection, believers seek God's guidance, strength, and presence, deepening their trust in Him.
- **Community and Support:** Being part of a faith community can provide crucial support during difficult times. Fellow believers can offer encouragement, prayers, and a sense of shared faith that strengthens one's resolve to anchor in God's truth.
- **Living in Alignment with God's Truth:** Faith is not passive; it calls believers to live in alignment with God's truth and principles. This involves making choices and decisions based on one's trust in God, even when the world's values and circumstances may oppose those choices.

In summary, faith goes beyond circumstances by anchoring individuals in the unchanging truth of God's character, His promises, and His sovereignty. It provides a solid foundation for navigating life's challenges with hope, peace, and the assurance that, ultimately, God's truth will prevail. Faith allows believers to

transcend the limitations of the physical world and find meaning and purpose in their relationship with the divine.

### **The Power of Renewed Mindsets**

- Exploring the role of transformed thinking in strengthening faith.
- Scriptures: Romans 12:2 - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Transformed thinking plays a crucial role in strengthening faith, as it involves a shift in mindset, perspective, and understanding that aligns more closely with spiritual truths and beliefs. Here's an exploration of how transformed thinking can enhance and fortify one's faith:

- **Renewing the Mind:** The concept of transformed thinking often involves "renewing the mind" as mentioned in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This renewal is a process of replacing worldly or negative thought patterns with thoughts that are grounded in faith and spiritual truth.
- **Alignment with God's Word:** Transformed thinking aligns one's thoughts and beliefs with the teachings of sacred texts, such as the Bible or other religious scriptures. It involves studying and meditating on these texts to gain a deeper understanding of God's character, His promises, and His will.
- **Overcoming Doubt:** Transformed thinking helps individuals overcome doubt and unbelief. It allows believers to confront and challenge their doubts by focusing on the evidence of God's faithfulness and the experiences of spiritual growth and transformation.
- **Developing a Kingdom Perspective:** It shifts focus from worldly concerns to a kingdom perspective. Believers begin to see the world and their circumstances through the lens of God's

sovereignty and eternal purposes, which can provide a sense of purpose and peace even in difficult times.

- **Replacing Fear with Trust:** Transformed thinking replaces fear with trust. Instead of being consumed by anxiety and worry, individuals with transformed minds learn to cast their cares upon God, trusting in His wisdom and care (1 Peter 5:7).
- **Cultivating Gratitude:** Gratitude is often a natural byproduct of transformed thinking. As individuals gain a deeper understanding of God's love and provision, they become more thankful for His blessings, which, in turn, strengthens their faith.
- **Resisting Conformity:** Transformed thinking resists conformity to the patterns and values of the world that may be contrary to one's faith. It encourages believers to live in a way that reflects their spiritual convictions, even when it goes against societal norms.
- **Encountering God Personally:** Transformed thinking can lead to personal encounters with God, where individuals experience His presence, guidance, and love. These encounters serve as powerful confirmations of faith and strengthen one's belief in the reality of the divine.
- **Applying Faith in Daily Life:** Transformed thinking doesn't remain theoretical; it results in the practical application of faith in daily life. It leads to decisions and actions that reflect one's trust in God's wisdom and guidance.
- **Community and Support:** Being part of a faith community that values transformed thinking can provide mutual encouragement and accountability. It allows individuals to learn from one another and grow together in their faith journey.

In conclusion, transformed thinking is a vital component of strengthening faith. It involves reshaping one's thoughts and

beliefs to align more closely with spiritual truths, God's character, and His promises. This renewed perspective not only deepens faith but also empowers individuals to live out their beliefs in a way that is consistent with their convictions and values.

### **Faith Manifested Through Works**

- Understanding how faith is demonstrated through actions and obedience.
- Scriptures: James 2:26 - "*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*"

Faith is often demonstrated through actions and obedience in religious and spiritual contexts. It's not merely an abstract belief but a lived-out conviction that influences how individuals conduct themselves and make choices. Here's an exploration of how faith is expressed through actions and obedience:

**Believing Without Seeing:** Faith, by its nature, involves believing in something that cannot be empirically proven or seen. When individuals act in accordance with their faith, they demonstrate their trust in the unseen and their conviction in the existence of spiritual realities.

- **Obedience to God's Commands:** In many faith traditions, obedience to God's commands is a central aspect of faith. This obedience is not rooted in fear but in love and trust. Believers follow the moral and ethical guidelines set forth in their religious texts as a way of expressing their faith and devotion to God.
- **Living a Life of Integrity:** Faith influences a person's character and integrity. Believers strive to live consistently with their faith convictions, which often includes practicing honesty, humility, and compassion in their interactions with others.
- **Service and Charity:** Faith often leads to actions of service and charity. Many religious teachings emphasize the importance of helping those in need, and faith-driven individuals are often

motivated to do so as a tangible expression of their love for God and their fellow human beings.

- **Prayer and Worship:** Faith is expressed through prayer and worship. Believers engage in acts of worship, such as prayer, meditation, and praise, as a way to connect with the divine and demonstrate their reverence and trust in God.
- **Taking Risks:** In some cases, faith requires taking risks. This could involve stepping out of one's comfort zone to follow a calling or conviction, even when it seems uncertain or challenging. The story of individuals like Abraham leaving his homeland in response to God's call is an example of such faith-driven risk-taking.
- **Endurance in Trials:** Faith is demonstrated through endurance in the face of trials and adversity. When believers persevere through difficulties, trusting that God is with them and that there is a purpose in their suffering, they exemplify their faith.
- **Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Faith can lead to forgiveness and reconciliation. Believers, motivated by their faith, may choose to forgive those who have wronged them and seek reconciliation in line with their religious teachings.
- **Living with Hope:** Faith often brings a sense of hope that transcends circumstances. Even in the midst of challenges, those with faith continue to live with optimism and trust in God's ultimate plan.
- **Mission and Evangelism:** Some faith traditions emphasize spreading their beliefs to others. Believers engage in missions and evangelism to share their faith with the world and invite others to join in their journey of faith.
- **Humility and Submission:** Faith involves humility and submission to a higher power. It acknowledges that humans are

not in ultimate control and that they must surrender their will to a divine plan, which can be demonstrated through acts of humility and submission.

In summary, faith is not just a set of beliefs held in one's mind; it is a dynamic force that shapes one's actions, decisions, and interactions with others. It is expressed through obedience to religious teachings, acts of service, love for others, and a deep trust in the divine, even when faced with uncertainty and challenges. Faith, when lived out authentically, is a powerful testimony of one's spiritual convictions.

### **Walking in The Unknown**

- Exploring how faith often leads us into uncharted territories and new experiences.
- Scriptures: Hebrews 11:8 - *"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."*

Faith often leads individuals into uncharted territories and new experiences, as it encourages them to step beyond their comfort zones, embrace the unknown, and trust in divine guidance. Here's an exploration of how faith can be a catalyst for venturing into unfamiliar territory:

**Trusting in Divine Guidance:** Faith often involves trusting in a higher power or divine guidance. When individuals have faith, they believe that God or a spiritual force will lead them in the right direction, even if the path is unfamiliar or uncertain.

**Answering a Divine Call:** Many religious traditions teach that faith can lead to a sense of calling or purpose. Individuals may feel compelled to pursue a particular path or mission, even if it means leaving behind the familiar. This can lead to a profound sense of purpose and fulfillment.

### **Leaving the Comfort Zone:**

Faith often requires individuals to step out of their comfort zones. This might involve leaving one's hometown, starting a new career, or embarking on a mission trip to a foreign country. These experiences can be challenging but also incredibly transformative.

### **Facing Fear and Uncertainty:**

Venturing into uncharted territories can be frightening and uncertain. Faith encourages individuals to confront their fears and doubts, believing that they will be supported and guided through the unknown.

### **Personal Growth and Transformation:**

New experiences and uncharted territories can lead to personal growth and transformation. Faith-driven individuals often find that they develop resilience, adaptability, and a deeper sense of self as they navigate unfamiliar terrain.

### **Strengthening of Faith:**

Stepping into the unknown can be a test of faith. When individuals see how their faith sustains them and leads them through challenges, it can strengthen their trust in the divine and deepen their spirituality.

### **Cultural and Interfaith Encounters:**

Faith-driven journeys can lead to encounters with people from different cultures and faith backgrounds. This exposure can promote greater understanding, tolerance, and the opportunity to share one's own faith perspective.

**Learning and Discovery:** Faith often encourages a thirst for learning and discovery. Exploring new territories can lead to the acquisition of knowledge, insights, and a deeper understanding of the world and one's faith.

### **Inspiring Others:**

Acts of faith and the willingness to explore the unknown can inspire others to do the same. A person's journey of faith may serve as a beacon of hope and courage for those who are watching and learning from their experiences.

### **Building Trust and Resilience:**

Faith in uncharted territories can build trust in God's providence and resilience in the face of adversity. Believers learn to rely on their faith as a source of strength and guidance.

### **Living a Life of Adventure:**

Faith-driven individuals often describe their journey as an adventure. They embrace the unpredictability of life and find excitement in the opportunities and challenges that come their way.

In summary, faith often leads individuals into uncharted territories and new experiences by inspiring them to trust in divine guidance, answer a higher calling, and step beyond their comfort zones. These journeys can be transformative, challenging, and ultimately fulfilling, as they allow individuals to grow spiritually, personally, and culturally while strengthening their faith along the way.

### **Nurturing a Growing Faith**

- Discussing the importance of nurturing and cultivating faith throughout life's journey.
- Scriptures: 2 Thessalonians 1:3 - *"We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing."*

Nurturing and cultivating faith throughout life's journey is of paramount importance in many religious and spiritual traditions.

Faith is not a static belief but a dynamic, evolving relationship with the divine that can bring meaning, purpose, and resilience to one's life. Here are key reasons why nurturing and cultivating faith throughout life's journey is crucial:

- **Spiritual Growth:** Faith is a journey, not a destination. Nurturing and cultivating faith means continually seeking a deeper understanding of one's beliefs, values, and the divine. This ongoing growth is essential for spiritual maturity and a closer connection with the divine.
- **Guidance and Direction:** Faith provides guidance and direction in life. As individuals face decisions, challenges, and uncertainties, faith offers a moral compass and a sense of purpose that helps them navigate their journey with confidence and clarity.
- **Source of Hope:** Faith serves as a wellspring of hope, especially in difficult times. It provides the assurance that there is meaning and purpose in suffering and adversity, and it instills the hope that better days are ahead.
- **Strength in Trials:** Cultivating faith equips individuals with the inner strength to endure trials and setbacks. It helps them remain steadfast and resilient in the face of life's challenges, knowing that they are not alone and that there is a higher purpose at work.
- **Deeper Connection with the Divine:** Nurturing faith leads to a deeper and more intimate connection with the divine. Through prayer, meditation, and spiritual practices, individuals can draw closer to God or the spiritual source of their faith, experiencing profound moments of communion and revelation.
- **Enhanced Relationships:** Faith often fosters values such as love, forgiveness, and compassion. Nurturing faith can lead to improved relationships with others, as individuals seek to live out these values and extend grace and understanding to those around them.

- **Sense of Community:** Many faith traditions emphasize the importance of community. Nurturing faith often involves active participation in a faith community, where individuals find support, encouragement, and opportunities for service and fellowship.
- **Meaning and Purpose:** Faith provides a sense of meaning and purpose in life. It answers profound existential questions, such as "Why am I here?" and "What is the meaning of life?" Nurturing faith helps individuals find fulfillment and direction in their journey.
- **Continual Learning:** Cultivating faith requires ongoing learning and exploration. Individuals delve deeper into their religious or spiritual texts, engage in theological study, and seek wisdom from spiritual leaders to expand their understanding of faith.
- **Generational Impact:** Nurturing and cultivating faith within families and communities can have a generational impact. Passing down faith traditions, values, and stories can create a legacy of faith that continues to influence future generations.
- **Lifelong Quest for Truth:** Faith invites individuals to engage in a lifelong quest for truth and understanding. It encourages intellectual curiosity and the pursuit of wisdom, as individuals seek to reconcile their beliefs with the ever-changing world around them.

In conclusion, nurturing and cultivating faith throughout life's journey is a vital and ongoing process that enriches one's spiritual life, provides guidance, offers hope, and fosters resilience. It is a dynamic relationship with the divine that shapes character, values, and purpose, and it can profoundly impact one's outlook on life and interactions with others.

## **The Connection Between Faith and Prayer**

- Understanding how faith plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of our prayers.

- Scriptures: Matthew 21:22 - *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

Faith and prayer in God are deeply interconnected, and together, they form a powerful and transformative aspect of spiritual life. Here's a focused exploration of how faith plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of our prayers to God:

**Foundation of Belief:** Faith is the foundation of our belief in God's existence, goodness, and sovereignty. When we pray to God, it is an expression of our faith in His presence and His ability to hear and respond to our petitions.

**Trusting God's Wisdom:** Faith in God involves trusting His wisdom and knowing that He understands what is best for us. As we pray, our faith allows us to surrender our desires to God's perfect will, confident that He knows what is best for our lives.

- **Alignment with God's Promises:** Many faith traditions teach that God has made promises to His followers. When we pray with faith, we align our requests with these promises, believing that God will fulfill His word. Our prayers become a reminder of God's faithfulness to His people.

- **Confidence in God's Response:** Faith-filled prayers are marked by confidence in God's response. We believe that God listens to our heartfelt pleas and will answer in His own way and time, according to His divine plan. This confidence can bring a sense of peace and assurance.

- **Persistence in Prayer:** Faith encourages persistence in prayer. Believers with faith are more likely to persevere in their requests, demonstrating their trust that God is at work behind the scenes, even when the answers are not immediate.

- **Prayer as Relationship:** Faith sees prayer as a form of communication and relationship-building with God. It's not just a list of requests but an ongoing conversation with the Divine. This relational aspect deepens our connection with God and opens us to His guidance.
- **Gratitude and Praise:** Faith-filled prayers often include expressions of gratitude and praise to God. We acknowledge His goodness, faithfulness, and sovereignty, reinforcing our trust in Him and strengthening our relationship.
- **Submission to God's Will:** Faith allows us to pray with an open heart and a willingness to accept God's wisdom, even when it differs from our desires. This submission is a crucial aspect of effective prayer, demonstrating our trust in God's plan.
- **Healing and Peace:** Faith contributes to emotional and spiritual healing through prayer. Believers often find that their faith-filled prayers bring a sense of peace, comfort, and healing, even when external circumstances remain unchanged.

In summary, faith in God forms the bedrock of effective prayer. It establishes our trust in His wisdom and goodness, aligns our requests with His promises, instills confidence in His response, fosters a deep relationship, encourages persistence, and brings healing and peace. The combination of faith and prayer is a powerful force that shapes our spiritual journey and draws us closer to the Divine.

### **Walking Forward in Faith**

- Discussing the ongoing nature of faith, calling us to continue the journey.
- Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 5:7 - "For we live by faith,

The nature of faith is inherently ongoing, calling us to continue the journey of belief, trust, and spiritual growth throughout our

lives. Faith is not a one-time event but a lifelong process, and here's why it is considered an ongoing journey:

- **Deepening Understanding:** As we journey through life, our understanding of faith and spiritual truths can deepen. What we believed as children may evolve and become more nuanced as we gain wisdom and experience. This ongoing deepening of understanding is a hallmark of faith's ongoing nature.
- **Challenges and Doubts:** Faith is not immune to challenges and doubts. Throughout life, we encounter questions, uncertainties, and trials that test our faith. These challenges are opportunities for growth as we grapple with them and seek answers to strengthen our faith.
- **Maturity and Transformation:** Faith is not static; it matures and transforms over time. As we face life's experiences, including successes, failures, joys, and sorrows, our faith can grow stronger and more resilient. It can lead to a more profound relationship with the divine and a greater capacity for compassion and empathy.
- **Walking Through Seasons:** Life unfolds in seasons, and faith accompanies us through each one. Whether we are in a season of joy, abundance, sorrow, or hardship, our faith provides a constant presence and guidance, helping us navigate the unique challenges and blessings of each season.
- **Continual Renewal:** Many faith traditions emphasize the importance of continually renewing one's faith. This may involve regular practices like prayer, meditation, worship, and study that keep the spiritual journey alive and vibrant.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Faith invites us to be lifelong learners. We are encouraged to explore and deepen our understanding of our beliefs, religious texts, and spiritual teachings. This pursuit of knowledge contributes to the ongoing nature of faith.

- **Impact of Life Experiences:** Our life experiences can profoundly shape our faith. Positive experiences may strengthen our trust in the divine, while difficult ones may lead to moments of questioning. Regardless, these experiences can be a catalyst for growth and a deeper relationship with the divine.
- **Serving Others:** Faith often calls us to a life of service and selflessness. As we serve others and engage in acts of compassion and justice, our faith is continually exercised and enriched, as it becomes more than a personal belief but a way of living and relating to the world.
- **Supportive Community:** Being part of a faith community can provide ongoing support, encouragement, and accountability in our spiritual journey. These communities can offer opportunities for shared growth and learning.
- **Eternal Perspective:** Many faith traditions teach that faith has an eternal perspective. It extends beyond our earthly lives, reminding us that the journey continues into the afterlife. This perspective provides hope and purpose for the ongoing nature of faith.

In conclusion, faith is not a static or isolated concept but a dynamic and ongoing journey. It calls us to continually deepen our understanding, navigate life's challenges, mature and transform, walk through the seasons of life, and engage in lifelong learning and service. Faith invites us to embrace its ongoing nature, recognizing that the journey itself is a source of growth, fulfillment, and spiritual connection.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE POWER OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP IN PRAYER



Acts 16:23-26

*“And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.*

*(24) Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

*(25) But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*

*(26) Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed."*

This Bible story begins the unjust arrest of Paul and Silas. Because they had cast a spirit of divination out of a girl, the local Philippian authorities beat them and then threw them into a jail cell. Besides the trauma of the severe beating, they were fastened in stocks which clamped their arms and legs in an immobile position, causing cramps and loss of circulation. The atmosphere there was depressing. According to the standards of that day, a prison was more like the resemblance of a dungeon. A dark, damp, stench-ridden place, with no facility for waste or comforts of any kind.

Yet, in spite of the throbbing pain in their bodies and the disheartening atmosphere, at midnight Paul and Silas were heard praying and singing praises to God! What a strange sound this must have been to the other prisoners, who were used to only hearing the groans or cursing of those who had been beaten.

Then suddenly, there was an earthquake that shook the prison! The doors flung open, and amazingly, the bonds of Paul, Silas, and every other prisoner were released! What caused this mighty discharge of power?

### **Praise Elevates us into God's Presence and Power**

Paul and Silas knew the secret of how to lift their hearts above their troubles and enter into God's presence and power. Through praise and worship their hearts were raised into the joyous presence and peace of God, and provided God a channel for his power to operate in their circumstances.

The Bible says that God inhabits in the praises of His people (Psalms 22:3). In other words, God "dwells" in the atmosphere of His praise. This means that praise is more than a reaction of coming into His presence... praise to God is a vehicle of faith

which takes us into His presence and power! Praise and worship is the “gate-pass” which allows us to enter the sacredness of His glory. The psalmist writes, *“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name”* (Psalms 100:4).

This corresponds with Jesus’ teaching, that His presence will inhabit the gathering of believers who congregate in His name: *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). A “gathering in His name” means that Jesus must be the focus, the center of the assemblage. He must be the one preached about, sung about — the one praised and worshiped. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12). Consequently, Christ’s presence, along with His virtue and anointing, is manifested in this type of gathering.

Have you ever noticed when “gifts of the Spirit” operate in a church service? The power and anointing of the Holy Spirit usually becomes evident, subsequent to a time of worship and praise. Some think that worship is a response after the Holy Spirit moves upon them. However, it’s the other way around. God’s presence responds when we move upon Him with worship! Lifting up Jesus Christ through praise and worship invokes the Lord’s presence and power to flow in our midst.

### **What is Praise?**

Praise means “to commend, to applaud or magnify.” For the Christian, praise to God is an expression of worship, lifting-up and glorifying the Lord. It is an expression of humbling ourselves and centering our attention upon the Lord with heart-felt expressions of love, adoration and thanksgiving. High praises bring our spirit into a pinnacle of fellowship and intimacy between ourselves and God — it magnifies our awareness of our spiritual union with the most high God.

Praise transports us into the realm of the supernatural and into the power of God. “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance” (Psalms 89:15).

There are many actions involved with praise to God — verbal expressions of adoration and thanksgiving, singing, playing instruments, shouting, dancing, lifting or clapping our hands. But true praise is not “merely” going through these motions. Jesus spoke about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, whose worship was only an outward show and not from the heart. “*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*” (Matthew 15:8). Genuine praise to God is a matter of humility and sincere devotion to the Lord from within.

Unpretentious praise and worship pleases the Lord. He delights in the love and devotion of His children. According to the scriptures, the various expressions of praise bring blessing to the Lord. He eagerly awaits the fragrance of our affections, desiring to manifest His sweet presence and power in our midst. “...the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23).

### **Praise to God is a Lifestyle**

All too often, praise to God is something that many people leave at church, an event that happens only when they come together with other Christians. However, praise should be a part of a believer’s lifestyle, inter-mingled as a part of their daily prayer-life. At work, in the car, at home in bed, or anywhere; praise to the Lord brings the refreshing of the Lord’s presence, along with His power and anointing. “...*I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth*” (Psalms 34:1).

Praise is an expression of faith, and a declaration of victory! It declares that we believe God is with us and is in control of the

outcome of all our circumstances (Romans 8:28). Praise is a “sacrifice,” something that we offer to God sacrificially, not just because we feel like it, but because we believe in Him and wish to please Him. “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

### **Praise Sends the Enemy Running**

Since praise manifests God’s presence, we also realize that praise repels the presence of the enemy, Satan. An atmosphere which is filled with sincere worship and praise to God by humble and contrite hearts is disgusting to the Devil. He fears the power in the name of Jesus, and flees from the Lord’s habitation in praise. “*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God*” (Psalms 50:23).

When the children of Judah found themselves outnumbered by the hostile armies of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, King Jehoshaphat and all the people sought the Lord for His help. The Lord assured the people that this would be His battle. He told them to go out against them, and He would do the fighting for them. So what did the children of Judah do? Being the people of “praise” (Judah actually means Praise), and knowing that God manifests His power through praise, they sent their army against their enemies, led by the praisers!

Soon they went, ahead of the army declaring, “*Praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever!*” And the scripture says, “...when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten” (2 Chronicles 20:22).

When God's people begin to praise His name, it sends the enemy running! I challenge you to become a person of praise, and you will experience the release of the power of God!

- Praise is the expression of approval and adoration. When we praise, we glorify, we worship, we celebrate, we exalt, and we bless someone or something.

The question is, "When we praise, to whom are we directing our praise?" As Christians, out of all of the things on earth and in heaven, we should recognize God our Creator and our Lord, and we should direct our praise to Him. He is the One who is deserving of our praise.

We should praise God for His unending mercy, for His many spiritual blessings, and for His kindness to us, because He is good and His mercy is everlasting. But too often, our daily struggles or constant life demands can crowd out our praise to God.

Sometimes we may not feel like praising Him. At other times we may be struggling or are weary and we just don't praise Him. Still other times, we may feel as if God has let us down, so we decide that He does not deserve our praise. Or sometimes it may feel as though He is far away and does not really care about what is troubling us. The painful blows and losses in life may have sent us spiraling down to the point where we neglect to praise Him.

When we make a decision to fix our eyes on Jesus, and daily give Him praise, no matter what is staring us in the face, we will begin to see the struggles lose their grip over us. There is power in our acknowledgment that God is worthy of our worship and praise. And as we press close to Him, our hearts become more in tune with our Creator and King.

Here are a few reasons why we should praise:

- Praise gets the focus off of ourselves and directed back to God. He wants our eyes to be set firmly on Him, because that is where

true hope is found. God is worthy of our praise, no matter what we face from day to day. *“I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth”*—Psalm 121:1, 2

- Praise brings us to a place of humility. When we are humble, we remember our dependency on God and we acknowledge our need for Him. In our humility we recognize that He is in control. *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up”*—James 4:10.

- Praise causes the enemy to flee. Evil cannot stick around if we are praising God, who will fight our battles for us. James 4:7 says: *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

- Praise leaves no room for complaining and negativity. Through praise, we are focused on God, no longer allowing too much attention to be centered around our struggles. It is good to remember what He has already done for us. He already knows what concerns us, and can take care of all that burdens us. *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy”*—Psalm 103:2-4,

- Praise opens the way for God’s blessings over our lives. As we come into the presence of our King, He will not hold back His goodness. *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations”*—Psalm 100:4, 5).

- Praise invites His presence, and our spirit is refreshed and renewed. God dwells close to us when we praise Him and we are strengthened by His peace. *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I*

*give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*”—Psalm 14:27

- Praise paves the way for God’s power to be displayed. People’s lives are affected and changed when they praise. *“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”*—Psalm 16:11
- Praise shared through our testimonies serves to encourage others. Telling of God’s goodness has a way of helping to lift the spirit of others.

Today, we are living in uncertain times. Every one of us has been affected in one way or another by the virus. Perhaps you know someone who has lost their job. Maybe you are among those who lost homes. It may be that you contracted the virus and survived. Maybe you know someone who contracted the disease and did not survive. This is just one of many challenges people face every day, but it is up to us to decide how we want to handle what comes our way.

### **Praise Is a Choice**

We have a choice every day in this life. We can choose to live our lives absorbed in worry and stress. We can choose to ask God to help us take our eyes off all that may be swirling around us. We can also choose to look to Him, the One who holds it all together, the One who holds us in the palms of His hands.

God desires our whole heart. He desires our praise. He longs for us to acknowledge the power of His presence over our lives. He desires to bless us more than we could imagine. His Spirit urges us onward, calling us closer.

Every day, we should take Psalm 150 to heart and make it a part of our daily experience, especially through these difficult times. *“Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise*

*him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the trumpet and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.”*

Every chance you get, praise the Lord. In good times and bad, praise the Lord. In sickness and health, praise the Lord. With or without a job, praise the Lord. Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

# CHAPTER 7

## THE POWER OF DIVINE DIRECTION AND HOW TO OBTAIN IT



God's ways are far above the ways of man. The Lord says in Isaiah 55 verses 8 – 9:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (New King James Version

God knows all things; He knows how the end will be even from the beginning (see Isaiah 46:10). Does it not, therefore, make the most sense to get directions from God on which way you should go and what actions you should take? God loves you and is willing to direct you in the right way.

To receive divine direction means to be guided by God. In the Bible, we read in 1 Samuel 16 where the prophet, Samuel went to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the king of Israel. God told Samuel that He had chosen a new king from one of the sons of Jesse. God told him to go, and He would show him which of Jesse's son's to anoint as king. When Samuel saw Eliab, he said to himself that Eliab was the one God had chosen to be king. But the scripture records in 1 Samuel 16 verse 7:

*But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (New International Version)

Eventually, God picked David whom no one expected or could have imagined becoming the king of Israel. God does not look at what people look at; God has His own set of metrics for decision-making. There may be an opportunity presenting itself right now that ticks all the 'right' boxes and looks good, but God can see the end right now, and He is in a position to give you the direction on what to do about that opportunity.

The same thing goes for marriage; a person may look good today; with beauty, strength, wealth, connections, family name, etc. Only God can see what tomorrow holds, and God can tell if the person is a good match for you or not. Many people who make a shipwreck of their lives and destinies do so because they rely on the looks and appearances before them in people, business opportunities, job offers, location for ministry, type of ministry, choice of geographic location, career, friends, etc.

The scripture in Proverbs 16:25 makes very clear the importance of divine direction.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death

God provides direction in various areas and in numerous ways. Here are some of the forms divine direction takes.

## **1. God Directs His Children the Way They Should Go**

Exodus 13:17

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, *“If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.”* (NIV)

God directs on the exact way to go to a place or the specific way to achieve an aim. When God directs you on the way to go, you are sure of arriving at your destination. God knows the right path you need to take to achieve your purpose.

## **2. God Directs His Children Around Timing and Season**

God can direct you on what is the right time to take any given step in life.

In Genesis 26: 1 – 6 when there was a famine in the land, God told Isaac not to go down to Egypt, but to stay in that land for a while. God then prospered him and he became great in that place (and time).

Genesis 26: 2 – 3

The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 3 Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham (NIV).

Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father.

Acts 1: 4 – 5

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (NKJV)

### **3. God Gives Divine Ideas for Business and Other Endeavors**

God is the creator. He is creative and all-knowing, and He can direct you on what to do to prosper; what business to do, what career path to embark on, and He can also reveal an invention, or business ideas to you.

An example is Abraham. He dug wells (Genesis 26: 18 – 22), and used irrigation systems for his livestock farming. Jacob received a divine idea that led to great wealth transfer (Genesis 30: 25 – 43).

God gave Moses specific instructions on how to build the tabernacle (Exodus 25:40).

### **4. God Gives Divine Directions On the Solutions to Specific Problems**

In Joshua Chapter 6 God told Joshua to take the Israelites and continue the journey to the Promised Land, but a city they had to pass through, Jericho was securely shut, and had high walls. So God gave them specific directives on how to take the city, and pass through to take their inheritance (Joshua 6: 1 - 5).

In 2 Chronicles 20 God gave specific instructions that led to victory over the enemy.

In Exodus 15: 22 – 25 we see Moses and the Israelites travelling in the wilderness, and they came to an oasis, but the water was too bitter to drink. So Moses cried to God, and God showed him a

piece of wood. When Moses threw the wood into the water, it healed the water and made it good to drink. You can draw parallels with your own existence today; if there is anything causing bitterness and lack of any kind, you can ask God to reveal to you what to do.

# CHAPTER 8

## HOW TO OBTAIN DIVINE DIRECTION

### 1. You Have to Become a Child Of God

To receive divine direction, you need to become a child of God. This is the first requirement for obtaining divine direction. You become a child of God by surrendering your life to Jesus; and you become born again. Only children of God are led by God.

The Bible says in Romans 8: 14 “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God” (NIV).

If you have not already become a child of God by surrendering your life to Jesus, and making Him the Lord of your life, you can so do right now by praying the Salvation Prayer out loud, and (mean it from your heart).

### 2. Ask God for Divine Direction

When you are a child of God, you can ask for what you want from God, including divine direction.

Matthew 7: 7 – 11

*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

9 *“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”* (NIV)

The Lord also says in Jeremiah 33 verse 3 *“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”* To receive anything from God you need to ask in faith.

James 1: 5 - 7

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. (NIV)

### **3. Be Meek, Humble, And Willing to Receive Instructions From God**

The Bible says in Psalm 25:9 (NKJV)

The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way.

To receive direction from God you need to be humble about it, and be willing to accept God's direction.

### **4. Spend Time in Worship**

God will speak to you and give you divine direction as you spend time worshipping God in the quietness of your home, or wherever you can worship God and connect with Him. You can choose to worship God for hours at a time; worshipping the beauty of His holiness and the excellence of His majesty. The Holy Spirit will speak to you and reveal God's direction.

When you get to a place where all you are doing for hours is lifting God up and exalting His Holy Name, you get His attention and He comes to fellowship with you, and answers your inquiries.

The Lord says in Psalm 46:10 *“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. (KJV)*

## **5. Pray in Tongues**

God speaks to his children and gives them divine direction through visions. A way to receive visions is by praying in the spirit (praying in tongues) for hours at a time. When you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it comes with the evidence of speaking in tongues. If you would like God to reveal things to you, find a quiet place and fellowship with God, and ask God to reveal those things. Then pray in tongues for hours while asking God in your heart to reveal the issues to you.

When you want to start praying in tongues, tell the Holy Spirit *“Holy Spirit, I yield my mouth, tongue, and spirit to you, come and help me pray for .....*” and then pray in tongues for as many hours as you can. A minister (very likely Oral Roberts) has said it takes six hours of praying in tongues for your vision to open and you see into the realm of the spirit. When this happens you get the divine direction you desire.

## **6. Have a Closer Walk with God, and Obey the Word of God**

God speaks through His Word always. As a child of God, you can always start there to hear God’s voice and directions.

Jeremiah 7:23 (New King James Version)

But this is what I commanded them, saying, *‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’*

You will receive divine direction when you establish a real connection with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will speak to you and guide you. Establish a daily prayer time, and make it a habit to fellowship daily with God through worship and studying His Word.

## The Ministry of Giving in Prayer: Unleashing the Power of Generosity

The Heart of Giving in Prayer is not just a means to ask for blessings; it's a powerful avenue for giving. The ministry of giving in prayer involves offering blessings, interceding for others, and partnering with God in His work. In this exploration, we'll unveil the profound impact of giving in prayer, transcending mere requests to become channels of divine generosity.

### **Blessing Others Through**

Transformational power of speaking blessings over others in prayer

- Scriptures: Numbers 6:24-26 - "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

The act of speaking blessings over others through prayer is a profound expression of love, kindness, and faith. It carries a transformative power that can positively impact not only the individuals being blessed but also the one offering the blessings. Here's an exploration of the transformative power of this practice:

When we pray for someone and speak blessings over them, we are not just uttering words; we are invoking the divine and channeling positive energy and intentions towards that person. This act has several transformative effects:

## Fosters Connection:

Blessing others through prayer deepens our connection with them and with the divine. It reflects our genuine concern for their well-being and our desire to see them flourish.

- Encourages Positivity:

Blessings are inherently positive. When we pray for someone's health, success, or happiness, we are contributing to a more optimistic and hopeful outlook on life. Our words can inspire confidence and perseverance.

- Strengthens Relationships:

Offering blessings in prayer can strengthen relationships. It conveys a sense of care and support that nurtures trust and intimacy. It helps build a sense of unity and solidarity with others.

- Cultivates Gratitude:

When we bless others, we often reflect on the blessings we have received in our own lives. This practice cultivates gratitude and encourages us to count our own blessings, leading to a more positive and appreciative mindset.

- Promotes Forgiveness and Healing:

Blessing someone who may have wronged us or whom we've had conflicts with can be a transformative act of forgiveness and reconciliation. It allows us to release negativity and foster healing.

- Boosts Self-Esteem:

Receiving blessings can significantly boost a person's self-esteem and self-worth. When we genuinely bless others, we affirm their value and potential, helping them see themselves in a more positive light.

- Creates a Ripple Effect:

Blessings are like pebbles dropped into a pond; they create ripples that extend beyond the immediate recipient. Positive energy has the power to influence others and create a ripple effect of goodness in the world.

- Strengthens Faith:

As we offer blessings through prayer, we exercise and strengthen our own faith. Believing in the transformative power of prayer and blessings deepens our spiritual connection and trust in the divine.

- Promotes Inner Peace:

Blessing others can bring a sense of inner peace and contentment. Knowing that we've contributed to someone's well-being through our prayers brings a profound sense of fulfillment and joy.

In essence, speaking blessings over others through prayer is a beautiful and transformative practice that has the potential to uplift hearts, mend relationships, and bring positivity into the lives of both the giver and the recipient. It is a reminder of the interconnectedness of humanity and the profound impact our words and intentions can have on the world around us.

# CHAPTER 9

## INTERCESSION AND PRAYER PARTNERSHIPS



- Understanding the vital role of intercessory prayer in supporting individuals, communities, and nations.
- Scriptures: Ezekiel 22:30 - *"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it."*

Intercessory prayer plays a vital and significant role in providing support to individuals, communities, and even entire nations. This practice involves praying on behalf of others, bringing their

needs, concerns, and well-being before a higher power, and here's why it is considered so important:

- **Spiritual Intervention:** Intercessory prayer is a form of spiritual intervention. It acknowledges that there are circumstances and challenges beyond human control, and it seeks divine assistance and guidance. This can provide comfort and hope to those facing difficult situations.

- **Compassion and Empathy:** Intercessory prayer reflects compassion and empathy for the suffering of others. It shows that individuals care deeply about the well-being of those they are praying for, fostering a sense of unity and support.

- **Strengthens Relationships:**

Praying for others strengthens relationships and builds a sense of community. It brings people together in a shared act of caring and support, deepening their bonds and sense of belonging.

- **Promotes Healing:**

Intercessory prayer is believed by many to have a healing effect, not only on physical ailments but also on emotional and spiritual wounds. It can provide a sense of peace and comfort to those in need.

- **Fosters Forgiveness and Reconciliation:**

Praying for those with whom one has conflicts or grievances can be a transformative act of forgiveness and reconciliation. It encourages individuals to let go of bitterness and seek resolution.

- **Promotes Peace and Unity:**

On a larger scale, intercessory prayer can promote peace and unity within communities and nations. When individuals come together in prayer for the common good, it can have a positive impact on social harmony.

- **Provides Comfort in Crisis:** During times of crisis, such as natural disasters, political turmoil, or pandemics, intercessory prayer offers a source of comfort and solace. It helps individuals and communities cope with overwhelming challenges.

- **Support for Leaders:** Intercessory prayer extends to leaders and authorities, as people pray for wisdom, guidance, and righteous decision-making. This can have a stabilizing effect on governance and leadership.

- **Cultivates Hope:**

Intercessory prayer cultivates hope, reminding individuals and communities that there is always a source of help and support, even in the darkest of times.

- **Fosters a Sense of Responsibility:**

Praying for others can foster a sense of responsibility to take action and make a positive difference in the world. It motivates individuals to not only pray but also to engage in acts of service and social justice.

- **Acknowledges Dependency on the Divine:** Intercessory prayer recognizes human dependency on the divine. It humbles individuals, reminding them that they are not in complete control and that they need divine guidance and intervention.

Intercessory prayer is a deeply meaningful and impactful practice that provides spiritual support and intervention for individuals, communities, and nations. It fosters compassion, healing, unity, and hope, while also acknowledging the essential role of the divine in addressing human needs and challenges. It is a powerful expression of faith, empathy, and love for one's fellow human beings.

# CHAPTER *10*

## PARTNERING WITH GOD'S PURPOSES



- Exploring how intercessory prayer aligns us with God's desires for the world and His redemptive plan.

Intercessory prayer is not only a means of seeking divine intervention but also a way of aligning ourselves with God's desires for the world and His redemptive plan. Here's an exploration of how intercessory prayer serves this purpose:

**Participation in God's Work:** Intercessory prayer allows us to actively participate in God's work on Earth. By lifting up the

needs of individuals, communities, and nations, we align ourselves with God's desire for the well-being, transformation, and redemption of His creation.

- **Seeking God's Will:** Intercessory prayer involves seeking God's will and guidance. As we pray for specific concerns, we are essentially asking God to reveal His desires and intentions in those situations. This aligns our hearts and intentions with His divine purpose.

- **Reflecting God's Character:**

God is often characterized by qualities such as love, compassion, justice, and mercy. When we intercede on behalf of others, we are emulating these divine attributes and advocating for God's principles to be manifest in the world.

- **Bringing About Healing:**

Intercessory prayer frequently involves praying for healing, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. This aligns with God's redemptive plan, as He desires to bring wholeness and restoration to His creation.

- **Promoting Justice and Righteousness:** God's desires include justice, righteousness, and the alleviation of suffering. Intercessory prayer for social justice issues or the oppressed is a way of partnering with God in His mission to bring about fairness and equity in the world.

- **Reconciliation and Forgiveness:** God's redemptive plan includes reconciliation and forgiveness. When we intercede for those who are estranged or in conflict, we align ourselves with God's desire for reconciliation and healing of broken relationships.

- **Spiritual Awakening:** Intercessory prayer often seeks spiritual awakening and revival. This aligns with God's desire to

draw people closer to Him and bring them into a deeper relationship with the divine.

- **Global Transformation:** Many intercessory prayers encompass broader concerns, such as peace, unity, and the transformation of societies. These prayers echo God's intention to bring about global transformation and harmony.
- **Interceding for the Lost:** One of God's paramount desires is the salvation of souls. Intercessory prayer for the salvation of individuals who have not yet found faith aligns with God's longing for all to come to knowledge of the truth.
- **Humility and Dependency:** Intercessory prayer fosters humility and dependency on God. By acknowledging our limitations and turning to God for help, we align ourselves with God's desire for His creatures to rely on Him as their Creator and Sustainer.
- **Blessing Others:** Intercessory prayer often includes speaking blessings over others. This aligns with God's desire to bless and prosper His creation and to use us as instruments of His blessings.

Intercessory prayer serves as a powerful means of aligning ourselves with God's desires for the world and His redemptive plan. It involves seeking God's will, reflecting His character, advocating for His principles, and participating in His work of healing, reconciliation, transformation, and redemption. It is a profound expression of our partnership with the divine in bringing about positive change in the world.

The Ministry of Giving as a lifestyle is what you and I require to fulfil our divine purpose on earth.

Living a consecrated life encompasses all aspects of life. It is a sacrifice and God honours His children's sacrifices.

Through consecrated lifestyle, you can become instrument of God's generosity, impacting lives, communities, and the world at large.

May you and I continue to give generously, not only in our words but also in our actions, as we partner with God in His work of love and transformational journey on earth in Jesus might name .

## **FINAL WORD**

### Decision Time

If you have not given your life to Jesus, do it today; because, freedom comes by knowing Christ and walking with Him alone.

Say this prayer with faith in your heart:

Lord Jesus I come to You today, forgive me my sins, have mercy on me.

I believe You died for me and rose up on the third day, and now seated at the right hand of the Father. Lord Jesus, come into my heart and life.

I receive you now as my Lord and Saviour.

Thank You for accepting me. Amen.

This simple prayer, if you said it from your heart truly, is all you need do to enter into salvation, become born again, and begin to enjoy God's liberty.

Understand also that you need God in your daily walk in faith. Decide to serve Him today.

Decide to live for Jesus Christ alone. I have made this same decision to be for Christ Jesus alone.

God bless you for taking the decision to be saved and live the Christian life.

Contact us:

Please feel free to contact me for more talk and encouragement in your new faith.

Call or text Mrs Ochonogor Kelicha on 08033074456 or 08028180792

odinichi4real@yahoo.com.

God bless you richly in Jesus' name. Amen!

# About the Book

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# About the Author

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