

Using the Word of God in Prayer (Part I): Using God's Word to Enrich Your Prayer Life and its Effectiveness

"Many Christians struggle for years over how to pray effectively, not realizing that the best prayers ever prayed can be found in God's Word, the Bible. (Bill Bright, *Campus Crusade for Christ*)

"When I became serious about learning the word of God and obeying what it taught, it made an impact on me. But when I learned to *pray* Scripture, that's when the Word really came alive to me. And my prayer gained new power, because I was praying using God's word, which is eternal (Ps 119:89)." (John Maxwell, *Partners in Prayer*)

"Prayer does not cause faith to work, but faith causes prayer to work. As we read and meditate on the words of God through daily Bible reading, we will become more God-minded; more able to think and pray God thoughts. When God, by His Spirit makes a particular scripture real for us personally, it can become a prayer back to Him . . ." (Jim & Jean Stephens, *Resource Ministries International*)

Since faith is what causes prayer to work, one of the first steps to effective prayer is to increase our faith. Biblical faith is not faith in faith, but faith in the Living God. The way to increase faith in the Living God is to spend time in His Living Word (Rom 10: 17).

Using the Scriptures in prayer is reading, studying, meditating and applying the Word. There is no better way to increase intimacy and intensity with God. It will help you to better worship Him. Using the Scriptures in prayer is taking meditation and journaling to the next level. It is speaking God's Word back to Him, into the lives of others and claiming the promises of God all in one. It is using the word of God in prayer to direct us in praying according to the will of God (1Jn 5:14-15). It is being involved in prayers that have worked and will work. In a nutshell: it is appropriating the promises and applying the principles in the Word of God.

Using the Scriptures to pray does not confine prayers to the superficial level of the head: thinking, reasoning and talking. It works on the entire and innermost being: the heart, the attitude and the motives. It is not the rote repetition of meaningless phrases that we have picked up while listening to others pray. It is not a matter of the intellect. It is not superficial and stilted

conversations with the Lord. It is not just "saying" our prayers. It is a deep conversation and communication with the Father. It is a matter of the heart reaching, touching, calling, crying, even at times, rejoicing in the Lord. It is a process where the Author of Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, is allowed to assist us to pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus. Using the Scriptures in prayer demonstrates a lofty view of inspiration and illumination of the Scriptures. There is a connection between praying in the Spirit (Rom 8:26-27; Jude 1:20) and praying the Word of God back to Him.

Not many of us truly understand or appreciate the power and the potentials of the Word of God. The Word is effective *with us, with others, with the enemy*, but also *with God*.

Praying the Word of God may be summarized as:

- Taking God at His Word - God takes His word seriously (Jer 1:12)
- Praying according to the will of God. The Scriptures is the revealed will of God. (1Jn 5:14-15)
- It is holding on to the promises as the OT saints held on to the horn of the altar.
- It is claiming God's promises and pleading the promises of God
- God's word not only affirms His will but it sorts our motives. These are two important aspects of prayer. Praying the Word of God addresses both the will of God and the motives of man.
- Living by the Word of God is far more important than living by the strength and nourishment we receive from physical food. (Deut 8:3)

The Principles:

- Josh 1:8-9; Psalm 1:2-3 – Meditating on and obeying the Word of God bring prosperity and success
- Isa 55: 8-11 – God's Word will always accomplish whatever He purposes for it.
- Deuteronomy 30:11-14 – God never asks us to what is impossible. The Word often makes the seemingly impossible possible.
- Col 3:15-16; Eph 5:1-8-21 – Being filled with the Word is equivalent to being filled with the Spirit of God.
- 2Tim 3:16-17 – The Scriptures are inspired by God to equip us to do whatever God requires of us
- Heb 4:12-13 – The Word of God is effective
- Php 4:8-9 , Rom 12:3 – The Scriptures transform our minds and attitudes

The Pattern:

- Select a portion of Scripture that speaks to your heart on the subject you want to pray about
- Personalize and contextualize it as you read, applying it to your self or others you are praying for.
- Read, reflect and respond to the passage mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- As you read and reflect, stop and pray as the Spirit of God prompts you.

The Pay-off:

- Your devotional time will be revolutionized
- You will be drawn closer to God. You will find yourself walking closer with the Lord
- You will be filled with the Word of God.
- You will be filled with the Spirit of God
- You will be filled with the peace of God (Php 4:8-9)
- You will consistently apply the Scriptures to yourself and others more appropriately and accurately
- Your thoughts and your attitude will be changed and renewed (Rom 12:3)
- You will be praying more according to God's will
- You will be claiming more of the promises of God
- You will find your self receiving more blessings in your life
- You will find that more and more of your prayers are being answered
- Your worship will increase. It will become more accurate, intense and intimate
- You will grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2Pet 3:18)

The Practice:

Two Ways to use the Scriptures in Prayer:

The first is choosing a portion of Scripture that addresses a need or a situation in your life or that of others. Contextualize and personalize the passage and then articulate it to the Father, in the name of Jesus, under the influence of the Holy Spirit: Here are two examples:

1st Example:

The Passage: Phil 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

Praying this Passage:

Father I ask you to help me (or the name of the person you are praying for) to rejoice in you always. Let your gentleness be evident to me and others through me. I know you are near me and the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is near. Help me to live with the ever present possibility of my Lord returning today. Help me not to be anxious about anything (or mention whatever you are anxious about), but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present my requests in faith, steadily, consistently and fervently to you. May your peace, the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus, now and forever AMEN!

2nd Example:

The Passage: Colossians: 1:9-14

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you^[2] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Praying this Passage:

Father I ask that you fill me (or the person you are praying for/with) with the knowledge of your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. I ask this that I may live a life worthy of You and that I may please you in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of You, being strengthened with all power according to your glorious might so that I may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the You, Father, who has qualified me to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. You have rescued me from the dominion of

darkness and brought us into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Son you love, in whom I have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.

Another way to pray using Scripture is to read the portion of Scripture, over and over and reflecting on it. Note what it says about God, yourself, others, situations, needs, etc., and then use the phrases and ideas in the portion of Scripture to articulate your heart's cry and desires to the Heavenly Father. Here is an example:

Passage of Scripture: Psalm 146:1-10

¹ *Praise the LORD*

Praise the LORD, O my soul.

² *I will praise the LORD all my life;*

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

³ *Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortal men, who cannot save.*

⁴ *When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.*

⁵ *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,*

⁶ *the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them-
the LORD, who remains faithful forever.*

⁷ *He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.*

The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸ *the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,
the LORD loves the righteous.*

⁹ *The LORD watches over the alien
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.*

¹⁰ *The LORD reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.*

Praise the LORD.

Ideas from this Passage:

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The predominant name for God in this Psalm is LORD = YHWH. It refers to God being the Self-existing, Self-sufficient and Self-sustaining One. The name occurs 12 times in the 10 verses.

The Psalmist says in vs. 1-2 that he will praise God with all he has for as long as he has.

In vs. 3-4, he says that man is not the saviour or deliverer, but that he needs a Saviour and Deliverer.

v. 5 tells us that those who have the God of Jacob (a personal God) as their help and hope are blessed. The idea here is that they have the peace and prosperity of God. We have two additional names of God: God = ELOHIM = reference to God's strength and power and the God of Jacob = a personal God. He is not transcendent or absent from this universe and the lives of His people and children. He is always present. He is in control and He cares.

v. 6 tells us that He is the Maker (Creator) and the sustainer of all things and that He is forever faithful.

vs. 7-9 tells us that He is:

The Deliverer - Upholds the cause of the oppressed

The Just Advocate

The Provider - Gives food to the hungry

The Liberator - Sets prisoners free

The Healer - gives sight to the blind = Guide

The Encourager and the Comforter - the lifter up of the bowed down

The Lover - Loves the righteous

The Protector - Watches over aliens

The Sustainer - Sustains the fatherless and the widows

The Equalizer - Brings the schemes of the wicked to naught

v. 10 tells us that He is the Sovereign King who is Just and Benevolent - Fair, Kind and Good

Praying this Psalm:

Father I praise you that you are the self-existing, self-sufficient and self-sustaining one. I ask you to help me to love you and praise you with all I have for as long as I have.

Thank you for showing me that man, even the best of them, is not the saviour and deliverer, but that they need a Saviour and a Deliverer. I thank you that You are my Saviour and Deliverer.

Father those without a personal knowledge of you are helpless and hopeless and will be homeless. Thank you for being my help and my hope and that I have the eternal hope of a home with you forever.

I praise you that you are the Creator and the Sustainer of this universe. I thank you that you are in Control and that you Care, especially for me.

(For vs. 7-9 you can do two things – Praise Him for Who He is or pray that He will be and do all those things in your situation or circumstances. There is no reason why you can't do both. Let us apply this to the current situation in Iraq.)

Father I thank you that you are the Deliverer. I ask that you will uphold the cause of the oppressed in Iraq. Bring justice to them. Please provide food for the hungry and set those who have been held captives free. Open their eyes that they may see You and that the light of the Gospel will shine brightly in that dark place. Encourage and comfort those who are bowed down by the burden of sin and the oppression of their enemies. Protect the righteous in the land. Give the Christians there special grace and protection. Watch over the foreigners and sustain those who have been or will be made fatherless and widows by this war. May they find you as their Provider and Protector.

Father you are Sovereign. You are in total control and you bring the schemes and devices of the wicked to nothing. Frustrate the plans of the enemies. You are fair, just, kind, good and generous. Please grant deliverance and may those you deliver from political and physical oppression find spiritual freedom in Christ forever. I ask this in His precious and mighty name. Amen