

A little boy wanted \$100 very badly. He prayed for weeks, but nothing happened. So, he decided to write a letter to God requesting \$100.

When the postal authorities received the letter to "God, USA", they decided to send it to the President. The President was so amused that he instructed his secretary to send the little boy a \$5 bill. The President thought this would appear to be a lot of money to a little boy.

The little boy was delighted with the \$5 bill, and sat down to write a thank-you note to God. The postal authorities forwarded this letter on to the President, too.

It read:

"Dear God, Thank you very much for sending the money. However, I noticed that for some reason you sent it through Washington, D.C., and those guys deducted \$95 in taxes!"

Thank God that our prayers don't go to or through Washington D.C.!

*Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between His will and its accomplishments on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer. – Elizabeth Elliot*

There are many kinds of prayer. There is petitioning prayer, silent prayer, intercessory prayer, thanksgiving prayer, warfare prayer, even what some call "listening prayer." At its heart, prayer is nothing more or less than opening up your heart and mind to Christ.

Prayer is the language, the channel and the evidence of intimacy. Prayer could be as simple as a quick breath at a stoplight or a prolonged season of intercession. Prayer is transparent but more than anything prayer is alignment.

Alignment is something that is necessary to maintain regarding our vehicles and if we ignore it eventually it does damage to our tires. Prayer is the alignment of our souls on a regular and hopefully daily basis.

Prayer is the greatest yet most ignored asset in our spiritual lives. Ironically you don't have to be in a church or temple to pray. You don't have to kneel to the east; in fact you don't even have to say a word.

Every Christian is on a road to increasing maturity and intimacy in their spiritual lives. There is no way any of us can get around this truth. As our faith develops we will become more and more comfortable with conversing with God.

The most common prayer of all time is known as the Lord's Prayer. This lesson in prayer was a part of the Sermon on the Mount and is found in Matthew 6.

*When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

<sup>7</sup> “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. <sup>8</sup> Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask Him! <sup>9</sup> Pray like this:

*Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. <sup>10</sup> May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

*<sup>11</sup> Give us today the food we need, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. <sup>13</sup> And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. Matthew 6:5-13 NLT*

Based on this very familiar prayer I would like us to see it for what it is and let it call us today to make sure that we are connecting with God on a daily basis. Remember this is about alignment and aligning ourselves with God will in our lives and on this earth. I can’t think of much else more important than that. As we talk about this today, allow yourself to see the invaluable benefit of alignment and being on the same page with Christ every moment and every day of your life.

## **1. We align in prayer for power**

*“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.” Matthew 6:9 NLT*

Jesus is declaring that **God is the Source of our lives and the Author of our personal mission on this earth**. This is both awesome and amazing. Our God, the Sovereign Ruler of everything has a personal agenda for you and me. The only way we can know it is to be connected to Him on a continual basis.

What do we know about this power?

It is the power that created the world and formed mankind from the dust of the earth.

It is the power that destroyed the world because of wickedness but saved 8 souls in an ark full of animals.

It is the power that led Moses out of Egypt and held back the water for a dry crossing.

It is the power that blew down the walls of Jericho.

It is the power that filled Samson’s arms and legs and brought the house down.

It is the power that enabled David to kill Goliath.

It is the power that rained down fire from heaven on Mt. Carmel and then pulled Elijah into heaven a few years later in a fiery chariot.

It is the power that filled a widow’s pantry with just enough food and water when there was none to be had anywhere.

It is the power that sustained Job through the losses of life and fortune.

It is this power that gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego the power to stand up to the culture’s demands.

It is this same power that delivered Daniel from the lion’s den.

It was this power that enabled Jesus Christ to be born from a virgin and to obey the will of His Father in heaven even though it meant death on the cross.

It was this power that raised Jesus from the dead.

And it is this power that we evoke every day when we align ourselves with Christ through prayer.

## **2. We align in prayer for purpose**

In prayer we get the incredible opportunity to align with Jesus' purpose and to fulfill and facilitate God's agenda in the world. In prayer you and I get the chance to invite God to reveal Himself on earth through us. We are His daily representatives.

*"May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."* Matthew 6:10 NLT

So how does this work? Many times we pray only when we have some purpose. If Christians ever learn to once again embrace the will of God in their lives truly the world could be changed in dramatic fashion.

Too often we keep our heads down and operate in a survival mode from appointment to the next, from one crisis to the next or from one effort to another to somehow entertain ourselves and to numb the pain. How pathetically sad, when God invites us to participate in His will, that we choose to stay so focused on our own stuff.

Imagine how a parent would feel if on Christmas day when the gifts for their children were handed out, the children just took them, said "Thank you," and laid them aside with no attempt to open the gifts not even to find out what they were!

Imagine how the Lord must feel when He has given gifts to us that He intends for us to use, and yet we never take the trouble to find out what they are, never put them to work, and then excuse ourselves from serving the church by saying that we can't do anything!

As faith develops, you usually become comfortable conversing with God. God will become your best friend whom you can talk to about anything. You become secure, when you realize you can't shock God. As your trust grows you will realize that every circumstance in life is an invitation into greater intimacy with God.

The goal and idea is that you and I give our days to God. We give Him our lives, our vocations, our relationships, our ups and our downs. When things happen that take our breath away, we calmly or maybe not so calmly cry out to the one that we are best friends with. If you want to see examples of this study the Psalms.

C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity* says "The real problem of the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it. It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in.

### **3. We align in prayer for provision**

*"Give us today the food we need"* Matthew 6:11 NLT

When Jesus taught this prayer, the request for daily food was a really huge request.

It still is in most of the developing world.

As many as 2.8 billion people on the planet struggle to survive on less than \$2 a day, and more than one billion people lack reasonable access to safe drinking water.

The U.N. reports that 825 million people are still undernourished; the average person in the industrial world took in 10 percent more calories daily in 1961 than the average person in the developing world consumes today

An estimated 65% of U.S. adults are overweight or obese, leading to an annual loss of 300,000 lives and at least \$117 billion in health care costs in 1999.

In 2002, 61% of U.S. credit card users carried a monthly balance, averaging \$12,000 at 16% interest. This amounts to about \$1,900 a year in finance charges—more than the average per capita income in at least 35 countries (in purchasing power parity).

Americans eat 815 billion calories of food each day - that's roughly 200 billion more than needed - enough to feed 80 million people.

Americans throw out 200,000 tons of edible food daily.

The average American generates 52 tons of garbage by age 75.

The average individual daily consumption of water is 159 gallons, while more than half the world's population lives on 25 gallons.

So what kind of provisions are we praying for? This one is hard but I don't think any of us should take one meal for granted. I don't think we should live with expectations that our lifestyles of comfort will always be available or that somehow we are entitled to all of the stuff we consume and own.

There is an incredible freedom in trusting God for your daily needs. It is far less cumbersome than trying to consume more and more with no self-denial or self-awareness.

I once heard the story about a wealthy man who had no need for pocket change, yet he still took the time to bend over and pick up lost pennies and other coins. Whenever the man found a coin he would stop look at it in his hand, then after standing quietly for a moment, he would then put the coin in his pocket and continue walking. He was once asked about his unusual habit. "Why

does a man who has no need for money stand still as though he had just found a gold coin?" The man replied, "When I find a coin I look at the words, 'In God We Trust,' and I can hear God asking me, 'Do you still trust me?' Once I'm certain that I still trust God more than money I can continue with my day." Perhaps we should take the time to hear God ask us the same question, "Do you still trust Me; am I still first in your life?"

God will provide for you. He will provide for you when you walk in His ways and when you trust Him with all of your heart and soul.

#### **4. We align in prayer for partnership**

*"... and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us" Matthew 6:12 NLT*

You cannot save yourself. We cannot provide for our own salvation or the ability to forgive ourselves. We are invited to partner with Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. We are invited to accept Him as our Savior and our only hope of salvation in eternity.

Because He has forgiven us we are also called to forgive those who sin against us. I'll not have time to today really flesh this out but if you have not forgiven someone and you are holding a grudge or holding on to unforgiveness and bitterness, you are the loser in that game. Not forgiving will always hurt you more than the other person. Always.

So as we are praying for forgiveness let us remember to forgive those who have sinned against us.

Let me remind you of a little something found in the book of Matthew as taught by Jesus. In Matthew 5 we find these words: *So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.* Matthew 5:23-24 NLT

And in Matthew 18 we read these words: *If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.* Matthew 18:15 NLT

Forgiveness is not optional. *Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.* Colossians 3:13 NLT

#### **5. We align in prayer for petition**

*"And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one." Matthew 6:13 NLT*

This is the part of prayer we have down. We all are good at asking. Can I just remind you that God expects us to be thankful and grateful? We should never take for granted His goodness

toward us. We are told and instructed to ask and we should but I also want you to know that God honors are faithfulness. He longs for us to be in relationship with Him and it is a whole lot easier to ask God for something when you have been talking to him all along.

A young woman brought her fiancé home to meet her parents for thanksgiving dinner. After dinner, her mother told her father to find out about the young man. The father invited the fiancé to his study for a talk.

"So what are your plans?" the father asked the young man. "I am a Biblical scholar," he replied. "A Biblical scholar. Hmmm," the father said. "Admirable, but what will you do to provide a nice house for my daughter to live in?" "I will study," the young man replied, "and God will provide for us." "And how will you buy her a beautiful engagement ring, such as she deserves?" asked the father.

"I will concentrate on my studies," the young man replied, "God will provide for us." "And children?" asked the father. "How will you support children?" "Don't worry, sir, God will provide," replied the fiancé. The conversation proceeded like this, and each time the father questioned, the young idealist insisted that God would provide. Later, the mother asked, "How did it go, Honey?" The father answered, "He has no job and no plans, and he thinks I'm God!"

Well the fact is God will provide if we trust Him with our lives and live the way we should live.

Do you know how crazy it is to blow through this life doing it our way when all the time the Mighty and All powerful God of heaven and earth and all creation is waiting on us to walk with Him.

24 year old Danny Simpson was sentenced to 6 years in jail for robbing a bank. Danny got 6 years in the clink for stealing \$6,000. But the gun he used in the robbery ended up in a museum.

The .45 caliber Colt semi-automatic turned out to be an antique made in 1918 by the Ross Rifle Company. His pistol was worth up to \$100,000 on the collectors market. If Danny Simpson had known what he had in his hands, he would not have ended up in jail.

Many Christians live like this. They spend their lives searching for God's power and presence, not realizing it's already in their hands.

E.M. Bounds: "Nothing distinguishes the children of God so clearly and strongly as prayer. It is the one infallible mark and test of being a Christian. Christian people are prayerful; those whose minds are in this world are prayerless. Christians call on God; worldly minded people ignore Him. Prayer must be habitual but more than a habit. It is a duty but one that rises far above and beyond the ordinary implications of the term. Prayer is the expression of a relation to God, a yearning for divine communion. It is the outward and upward flow of our inward lives.