

# HOW TO PRAY WITH POWER

By

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## HAVE A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD -- FAITH

God answers prayer! The Bible says of Him, "*O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come,*" Psalm 65:2. Consider the implications of that statement. God is so ready to hear and answer prayer that He is called by the title, "*Thou that hearest prayer,*" God is so ready to hear and answer prayer for each person that the inspired writer declared, "unto thee shall all flesh (meaning all people of all generations, nationalities, races, and language groups) come." Yes, God answers prayer!

God not only answers prayer, He delights to answer prayer. His answers are not grudging. His response to petition of His people is not half-hearted. The Bible says of Him, "*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his*

*delight,*” Proverbs 15:8. Did you catch it? God delights when His children pray!

A human parent who truly loves his children finds a great satisfaction in fellowship with them and provision for them. God compared Himself and His provision for His dear children to a human parent who wants the best for His children, saying, “What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? (The obvious answer to those questions are “No!”) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”

Matt. 7:9-11.

Someone has well said, “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold on God’s willingness.” Pray! God delights to answer.

God has set up certain guidelines, signposts on the road to answered prayer, that we may know how to pray. There are five such guidelines set out in Holy Scripture, and they will be our consideration in the next five studies. Follow those guidelines, like you would follow the directions on a road map, and you will arrive at the blessed destination of answered prayer.

### **TO PRAY WITH POWER, YOU MUST HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD -- THE ATTITUDE OF UNWAVERING FAITH.**

The Bible issues a repeated call to faith in the experience of prayer. Consider a few passages of Scripture, which are but typical of so many other we will not mention.

Matthew 21:21, 22, “*Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*”

Mark 11:23, 24, “*For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them.*” What an amazing promise!

The positive affirmations of the victory which comes by faith is counterbalanced by warning of the defeat which can come through doubt. James 1:5-8 reads, “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” Do you see how the victory of faith can be defeated by the presence of doubt?

An imperative question is laid upon our hearts: “How can I increase my faith in God, and be able to pray with power?” Consider these suggestions on how to increase your faith.

You can increase your faith by reminding yourself that the Christian life is simply a life of faith. The Bible states it very simply, “*The just shall live by faith*” Rom. 1:17. *Faith is essential for salvation* John 3:14-18. *Faith is essential to keep one from sin* Rom. 14:23; Heb. 3:12. *Faith is essential to power in Christian service* Matt. 17:20; Mark 9:23; 11-23, 24. *Faith is essential to please God* Heb. 11:6. Yes, faith is the very life-principle by which a Christian lives. For a Christian to trust God is as natural as for him to breathe.

You can increase your faith by staying close to the Bible. Romans 10:17 reads, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Did you catch it? Faith comes by

hearing the word of God!

Read your Bible and look for these things. Look for testimonies to the loving faithfulness of God to His people. Look for accounts where He answered prayer in various situations and for various needs. Look for promises which He has made concerning His willingness to answer prayer for you and others. Look for demonstrations of His power which encourage you to believe that He can overcome all obstacles in bringing His will to pass. Yes, the testimony of Holy Scripture will increase your faith in God to answer prayer.

You can increase your faith by pondering the promises of God. Abraham gave us a good example: *“He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform,”* Romans 4:20, 21. You can do no better than that. Settle the issue once-for-all in your heart that God is able to do *“exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”* Eph. 3:20. He promises nothing He is unable or unwilling to do.

You can accept every promise of God as if it were newly given for you alone. His promises are that present and that personal. *“For all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are “Yes” and “Amen” unto the glory of God by us.”*

You can increase your faith by refusing to harbor doubt. You can not keep a doubt from arising. Satan will put the thought in your mind. But you can keep the doubt from remaining. Thrust such thoughts away from you by an act of your will. Do not allow it one moment of residence in your mind. Meet doubt with affirmations of faith. You are a believer, not a doubter.

Confess unbelief as a sin. Confess it as you would any other sin. Ask God to forgive you, to cleanse you of its defilement, and to make you strong in faith. He will help you overcome the sin of doubt.

You can increase your faith by trusting with all your power and asking God to increase your ability to trust Him even more. The cry of a father asking help for his poor demon-possessed son might well become your prayer: *“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”* Mark 9:24. Exercise all the power to believe that is in you. God will prove faithful and you will grow in your ability to trust Him. Ask God to enable you to trust Him the more and He will hear your prayer by giving you increase and increasing faith.

Always remember: To trust God is the height of sanctified wisdom but to doubt God is the depth of sinful ignorance.

We have taken the first step on our journey toward the destination of answered prayer. The first signpost on the highway of prayer has read: *“Keep an unwavering faith in the God who answers prayer.”*

*“Father, we thank you for your patience with us when we have doubted. Thank you for repeated promises and record of proof which show us the safety and wisdom of trusting You. We resolve to fruition. Lord, teach us to pray. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.”*

## **HAVE A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE -- BE FORGIVING**

Jesus gave a Model Prayer in response to the request of a disciple who asked, *“Lord teach us to pray”* Luke 11:1. That Model Prayer has seven petitions Matt. 6:9-13. The first three relate to the glory of God, the kingdom of God, and the will of God. The last four related to the needs of man for daily bread, forgiveness of sin, protection from temptation, and deliverance from the evil one. Of the seven petitions, Jesus selected only one upon which to enlarge by

further discourse. It was the fifth petition, which is stated, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," verse 12. That petition lies at the heart of prayer, and is vitally related to praying with power. Therefore, even the Model Prayer that Jesus gave is helpful in teaching us "How to Pray with Power."

The teaching of Matthew 6:12, with many other passages in the Bible, is clear. **To have power in prayer, you must maintain a spirit of forgiving love toward people.** That is the second guideline to be investigated in the study of "How To Pray with Power."

## **WITH WHAT PEOPLE MUST ONE HAVE THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP IN ORDER TO HAVE POWER IN PRAYER**

The Bible suggests there are three relationships of life in which the Christian must manifest the spirit of forgiving love.

There must be a spirit of forgiving love and Christian relationships in the home, in order for prayer to have power. The apostle Peter discussed the relation of husband and wife at some length in I Peter 3:1-7. He taught that the wife must be submissive to her husband and the husband must be loving and respectful to his wife. He concluded the discussion with this reason for such a relationship: "...*that your prayers be not hindered.*"

God said what He meant. A wrong relationship between husband and wife will hinder their prayer life. The wife who refuses to submit to her husband in the will of God cannot pray with power. The husband who does not love and respect his wife, cannot pray with power. That is clear teaching of the Holy Scripture.

The same principle applies to relationship of parents and children. God commanded parents to discipline and train their children in the Lord. He commanded the children to honor and obey their parents in the Lord. When the parents fail to obey that injunction, or when the children fail to obey that injunction, the power line of prayer is cut.

Is God speaking a word of explanation to some one through these words? Does some one see why prayer has been powerless in his life? A wrong relationship with members of the family can keep one from praying with power.

A wrong relationship with people in church will keep prayer from having power. Jesus said that if one comes to worship, and there remembers a brother has ought against him, he must first be reconciled to the brother before he offers his sacrifice in worship of God Matt. 5:23, 24. He said a difference between brethren was serious and that reconciliation should be sought private, persistently, and permanently Matt. 18:15-18. The church is the body of Christ. Division of His body is very serious. Restoration to peace and forgiveness must be made. Wrong relationships with believers in the church can sap the strength of your prayer life and leave you powerless in prayer.

A wrongful relationship with people in society can keep prayer from being powerful. Jesus did not limit the requirement to members of the family, nor to members of the church, when He said, "*If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,*" Matt. 6:14, 15.

Unforgiveness is the indication of a selfish spirit, the mark of a self-centered person. It is the very opposite of the spirit of Christ. There is no surprise in learning that such a spirit is so contrary to the Spirit of God that it saps the prayer life and robs it of power.

## WHY IS A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE NECESSARY TO POWER IN PRAYER?

The answer to that question is to be found in a review of the teachings of the New Testament concerning Christian forgiveness.

God commands Christians to forgive wrongs done to them. Jesus taught in words like these: *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespasses against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven time in a day; and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him,”* Luke 17:3, 4. Imagine forgiving someone of a wrong done seven times in a single day. It must be done, however, because God commands Christians to be forgiving.

Jesus went even further in teaching forgiveness. *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven,”* Matt. 18:21, 22. The idea is not that one should forgive four hundred and ninety times, and then should forgive no more, but that one’s forgiveness should be without counting the times. Forgive continually. That is the command of God.

Unforgiveness is a sin of the flesh. It is in direct violation of the command of God and of the example of Jesus. *“Remember how Jesus prayed on the cross, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,’* Luke 23:34. Remember how Stephen prayed for his murderers, *‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,’* Acts 7:60.” A violation of the known will of God is open and rebellious sin. Yes, a spirit of unforgiveness is sin.

God will not forgive any sin until He can forgive all sins. How foolish to ask God to forgive every sin except that of the willful disobedience of a bitter and unforgiving spirit. He will not do it. Suppose an adulterer came to God with the petition, “Lord, forgive me all my sin. However, know that I am an immoral reprobate (in direct disobedience to your command for moral purity) and I fully intend to continue that manner of life.” Would such a one receive forgiveness? Absolutely not. There would be no true repentance. There would be no honest dealing with sin. Forgiveness is not given to some sins until it is extended to every sin. Forgiveness of sin follows forsaking of sin (which is repentance). that is why unforgiveness suits the prayer line.

Consider Psalm 66:18 again: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* A bitter and unforgiving spirit which is not confessed, forsaken, and forgiven is being “regarded” (treasured, stored, kept as precious) in the heart. It takes the power out of prayer.

The sin of a bitter spirit is so subtle that it might be overlooked by an otherwise earnest Christian. Take care to search your heart. Ask God the Holy Spirit to deal with you in pointing out any such sin. As He reveals, confess it and forsake it. Make apologies, if necessary. Seek to restore broken fellowship. The work is worth the reward.

As an unforgiving spirit will hinder prayer, a gracious spirit of selfless love will strengthen prayer. Cultivate such a spirit and see the difference it makes. Here, then, is the second principle on “How to Pray with Power;” **To have power in prayer, you must maintain a spirit of forgiving love toward every person.**

“Father, teach us to forgive in love as you have forgiven us in love for Christ’s sake. From such a spirit of love, lead us on to know the joy of power in prayer. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**HAVE THE RIGHT BASIS IN ASKING -- THE NAME OF JESUS**

*“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Phil. 2:9-11.*

Behold the beauty of the name of Jesus! “The name of Jesus is so sweet, I love its music to repeat. It makes my joy full and complete, the precious name of Jesus.” No wonder every knee in all of creation shall bow at the name of Jesus.

Behold the power of the name of Jesus! Miracles of healings, exorcising demons, and answering spiritual needs are recorded in the book of Acts as performed by the power of the name of Jesus.

It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that the prayer which gets an answer must be given in the name of Jesus. That understanding is important because it is the third signpost on the road to answered prayer.

### **TO PRAY WITH POWER, YOU MUST PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS.**

The Bible repeatedly testifies that answered prayer is offered in the name of Jesus. Here are typical biblical statements.

*“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it,”* John 14:13, 14. Jesus continues with these words, *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you,”* John 15:16. As if twice was not enough to affirm the truth, Jesus continued, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

How many times would Jesus need to say a thing in order for it to be true? One time would be enough. How many times would Jesus need to say a thing for Christians to believe it? One time would be enough. Why, then, did He state and repeat over and over that prayer would be answered when it was offered in His name? Jesus affirmed the truth once and again because He wanted to impress it upon the heart of every Christian. Repetition was not to obligate God, but to assure Christians --people like you and me -- that the statements of God in Holy Scripture are true and certain.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS**

The answer to that question is essential since we must pray in the name of Jesus to pray with power.

To pray in the name of Jesus does not mean merely that we use the proper noun “J-E-S-U-S”, in our prayers. It is common that we conclude our prayers to God with some expression like “For Jesus’ sake,” “In Jesus name.” That custom arose because the Bible teaches us to pray in the name of Jesus. But much more is involved than just a pious expression tacked on to the end of a prayer.

Do you remember the story from Arabian nights? The robbers discovered a secret hiding place for their loot. They found a mountain which would respond by opening up to the command of a human voice. The band of robbers would ride up to the side of the mountain, the leader would cry out, “Open Sesame,” and the mountain would open up so they could go inside and hide their loot. It was just a fiction, of course.

I must warn you that the proper name “Jesus” is not an “Open Sesame” by which all the treasures of heaven are suddenly available to you by its repetition. To pray in the name of Jesus means much more than merely to recite his name in prayer.

What does it mean? To pray in the **name** of Jesus means to pray in His **authority**. Consider this illustration. A crime has been committed in the community. Law enforcement officers learn the criminals are hiding in a certain house. They surround the house. An officer knocks on the door and calls out, “Open in the name of the law.” That does not mean one of the officers outside is named “Law” as others are named Smith, Jones, Taylor, or Stewart. No. It rather means, “Open in view of the authority which resides in the system of law which governs the community.” “In the name of the law” refers to “the authority resident in the law.”

To pray “in the name of Jesus” means to approach God on the basis of the authority of Jesus. The Christian does not approach on the basis of the authority of Jesus. The Christian does not approach God on the basis of personal merit. He does not ask for answered prayer because he deserves to receive it. He approaches in the “name” (the worthiness, merit, authority) of Jesus and asks for answered prayer “for Jesus’ sake.”

The unworthy and undeserving sinner can come to God and receive forgiveness, cleansing, and every other need, because he comes in the “name” of Jesus. If he came in his own name, depending on his own right to approach God, he would be rejected. But prayer in the name of Jesus secures an answer for those who could receive an answer no other way.

The truth is that none of us, not even the best of us, deserve to approach God on the basis of our own merits. We are all sinners, though many are sinners saved by grace. The only claim we have before God is that claim secured for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

## **HOW CAN WE BE SURE THAT GOD IS WILLING TO RECEIVE US WHEN WE COME TO HIM THROUGH JESUS?**

The Bible says He will! Consider Hebrews 10:19-23, “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*” Hallelujah! What a wonderful truth! God receives with welcome each one who comes to Him in the name of His Son the same as He would receive Jesus himself. The way is open. “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,*” Heb. 4:16.

Dear Christian, come with confidence before God when you pray. Your acceptance there is not predicated upon your worthiness, but upon the worthiness of the Son of God. You can pray with power. You can pray with the same power which is exercised in prayer while living on earth among men. Jesus could say to the Father, “*Thou hearest me always*” John 11:42. You can say the same when you come to God in the authority of Jesus Christ. Amazing, but true!

Thus we conclude the third study on the subject, “How to Pray with Power.” Are you making notes as we mark the way to answered prayer? We have set up three guidelines thus far. To pray with power, you must have confident faith in God. To pray with power, you must have loving forgiveness toward people. To pray with power, you must come in full dependence upon the authority of Jesus before God the Father.

God has marked the way distinctly. He is encouraging you to follow it. He wants you to have an effective prayer life and to pray with power.

“Father, thank you for the privilege of prayer. Thank you that we come as one of your dear children in the name of your only begotten Son. Thank you that we are always accepted in His name. Father, teach us how to pray. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

### **HAVE A RIGHT SPIRIT IN APPROACH GOD’S WILL AND GOD’S GLORY**

“Teach me to pray, Lord; teach me to pray. This is my heart’s cry day unto day. I long to know Thy will and Thy way. Teach me to pray, Lord; teach me to pray.”

That desire is the yearning of every committed Christian. One of the disciples of Jesus expressed the petition for us: “*And it came to pass, that, as he (Jesus) was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples,*” Luke 11:1. Such a request must delight the heart of God today as it did then, since prayer is a valid way of communion with our heavenly Father.

God wants us to pray. God wants us to pray with power. That is why we are searching the Bible for principles which will guide us to the experience of prayer which sees the power of God upon it.

We have come to a fourth principle of prayer. It has to do with our motive in prayer. The first had to do with confidence in God, the second with our relationship with people, the third with authority in asking, so the fourth is concerned with the motive behind the prayer.

Here is the principle: **To pray with power, you must pray in accord with God’s will and for God’s glory.** In other words, your prayers must have pure motives behind them to have the power of God upon them.

### **THE RIGHT SPIRIT IN PRAYER IS A SPIRIT WHICH DESIRES THE WILL OF GOD.**

The delight of the child of God is to know and to do the will of God every day and in every way.

The will of God is related to prayer in these words recorded in I John 5:14, 15, “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*” Examine the chain expressed in the passage. We ask; He hears; we have.

How can a person know the will of God? There are many areas where the will of God is clearly expressed in the words of the Scripture. You do not have to pray, “If it be Thy will,” about the salvation of sinners, for instance, because God has already clearly expressed His will on that subject. Second Peter 3:9 declares that God is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” First Timothy 2:4 states that God is willing that all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. In many other areas, the will of God is clearly stated in the Bible. Therefore, stay close to the Word of God if you would know the will of God.

Jesus said, “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,*” John 15:7. Staying in the Word of God and living in the Spirit of the Son of God will assure that you will be able to pray in the will of God.

David illustrated the joy of praying in the will of God as stated in the Word of God. He heard God’s promises concerning an enduring dynasty and the spiritual blessings intended for his posterity. He came to God in prayer and requested, “*Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that thou*

*hast spoken....be established forever, and do as thou hast said,”* I Chro. 17:23.

Try it. Find some promise of God which relates to a petition you have. Present the petition on the basis of God’s promise and say to Him, “Do as thou has said,” What joy! What freedom in asking! What assurance of faith even before you see the answer! Try it and rejoice.

There are some areas where the will of God is not expressly stated in the Bible. How does a Christian pray about them. Apply broad biblical principles to the subject and see if you can discern the mind of God. Present the matter before God with this petition: “Father, I am asking you for this. If it is not in your will for me to ask, I will cease asking. I want to know your will. Please show me if I should pray further about it.” You can trust God to direct you. If you pray earnestly and honestly about it with that spirit as many as three times, God will give you an inner impression whether to pray about it further. Trust His leading. If he does not instruct you to cease the petition, or to do change the petition, pray with full assurance the matter is in His will.

God is not hiding His will from His children. You can know the will of God as you seek Him in sincerity and in truth. Do it!

### **THE RIGHT SPIRIT IN PRAYER IS A SPIRIT WHICH DESIRES THE GLORY OF GOD.**

Jesus said the glory of God is related to answered prayer. Do you remember His words in John 14:3, 14? Jesus promised, “*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, **that the Father may be glorified in the Son.** If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it,*” Did you catch the statement? Jesus said He would grant whatever petition is presented in His name because that would glorify the Father.

The Apostle James warns that those petitions which are aimed at the satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh, rather than the glory of God, will go unanswered. James 4:2 explains our lack by saying, “*...ye have not, because ye ask not,*” Some one is sure to reply, “But I asked and did not receive.” The apostle continues, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts,*” 4:3. There is the explanation of much unanswered prayer.

Do not interpret that teaching to mean that God will not respond to petitions for supply of the personal need of His children. The Model Prayer teaches Christians to pray about “daily bread” as well as forgiveness and spiritual leadership. The “lust” of which James speaks as hindering an answer to prayer is the basis desires of the lower aspects of human nature. Ask God for every proper need and He will answer with delight. It brings glory to God to provide for the needs of His dear children.

How can we know whether a particular thing will glorify God? Here are some tests to apply. Is the matter desired a proper response to a legitimate human need? Is the matter desired condemned any where in the Bible? Would the matter desired make you closer to God or separate you from God? Would you feel free to ask your pastor, or some spiritually mature friend to pray with you for the matter desired? Would the matter desired enable you to do the will of God more perfectly, or would it keep you from the will of God? The answer to questions like that will help you discern whether a particular petition will work out to God’s glory, and will guide you in determining whether to continue to ask for it.

The will of God is for your welfare. The glory of God is to your benefit. You need fear neither. The best possible thing that could happen to you would be for the will of God to be done through you unto the glory of God by you.

Claim God's promises. Pray confidently in the name of Jesus Christ. *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."* II Cor. 1:20.

"Father, thank you that your blessed will is for our salvation, our sanctification, and our supply. Thank you that the affairs of the kingdom of God are so designed that the glory of our lives is to glorify you. Teach us to pray with the right spirit -- the will of God to the glory of God by us. In Jesus' name. Amen."

### **HAVE A RIGHT DEALING WITH SIN -- PURITY**

*"If I regarded iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,"* Psalm 66:18. That scripture sets out another guideline which directs us toward the goal of answered prayer, and must be followed by every one who would have power in prayer.

Sin is the very opposite of God. It is the violation of the holiness He requires, a transgression of the law He has given, a coming short of the standard He has set, a denial of the Lordship He claims, and an identification with the opponent to His kingdom. No one can expect to live in sin and be accepted of God.

There must be a resolute and right dealing with sin, if there is to be any power in prayer. That is why I have chosen to deal with it as our fifth principle in "How to Pray with Power." The principle may be stated in these words:

### **TO PRAY WITH POWER, YOU MUST FIRST DEAL WITH GOD IN RECEIVING CLEANSING FROM EVERY SIN.**

What kind of sin must be dealt with? What kind of sin hinders prayer? Any sin, every sin, must be dealt with resolutely and honestly.

The sin of neglect of the Scripture will result in hindrance to power in prayer. Hear Proverbs 28:9, *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."* That is a strong statement. To "turn away the ear from hearing the law" could mean to reject God's Word when it is spoken, or to neglect to hear God's Word by personal Bible study. Either way is to turn away the ear. The Bible does not say that will make a prayer weak and listless, but rather that it makes prayer an "abomination." He who truly desires to pray with power must keep available to be instructed from the Word of God and must diligently seek to know the Bible better and better.

The sin of indifference to God's call will result in powerlessness in prayer. Proverbs 1:24-31 is self explanatory; it is gripping in its expressions: *"Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh....Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."*

Take warning. No person can ignore God until need arises and then have power in prayer. Prayer is not a recourse in times of emergency. It is to be a daily communion with the Heavenly Father. Practice in prayer makes for power in prayer.

The sin of self-indulgence results in powerlessness in prayer. Refer to the statement of James 4:3, *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."*

God is not in the business of providing for every whim of the flesh. He supplies every need and many desires which are not true necessities. But He will not provide those things which lessen our spiritual growth nor hinder our spiritual service.

Indulgence of the fleshly lusts always results in a weakened spiritual condition. God wants us to be strong, but the fleshly lusts will make us weak. That is why the sin of self-indulgence will make us powerless in prayer. *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” Gal. 5:17. To have power in prayer, we must “walk in the Spirit” and crucify the lusts of the flesh*  
Gal. 5:16, 24, 25.

The sin of unstable faith will take the power out of your prayer life. I remind you once again of the divinely inspired words of James 1:6-8, *“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”*

Who is a “double minded man”? He is a man who is looking both ways at the same time. He believes and he doubts. He trusts and he fears. He commits and He draws back. He cannot make up his mind for sure. Williams translates the verse saying such is “a person with two minds, unreliable in every step he takes.” Beck calls him “half-hearted -- wavering in everything he does.” John Bunyan presented such a character in his book **Pilgrim’s Progress** and called him “Mr. Looking-Both-Ways.” A person whose mind is never fixed, whose resolve is never set, whose course is never determined, is unreliable in every aspect. Why should such a person expect to have power in prayer? He who cannot fix with certainty on God will never know the joy of powerful praying.

Any iniquity will rob the prayer life of its power and potential. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah in these words, *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear,”* Isaiah 59:1, 2.

Think about God’s statement. The problem was not God’s inability to do because of His weakness. The problem was not God’s inability to hear because of His deafness. The problem was the iniquities which separated between the people and their God. The problem was the sins which hid His face from them. What a tragic statement of truth.

God cannot countenance sin in any form, in any person, under any condition, for any time. The sinner can come to God and receive cleansing through forgiveness. That is grace. But no one can come to God, holding on to sin and expect to be received in peace. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,”* Psalm 66:18.

What is meant by “regarding iniquity in the heart? It means to hold on to it, to treasure it, to refuse to confess it and forsake it. Such a clinging to sin cuts the line which brings power into prayer.

If you have any kind of sin in your life, confess it and forsake it. Let the faithful and just God forgive it and wash away the stain it leaves I John 1:9. Then you will be in a position to have power in prayer.

These five visits together have sought out guidelines on how to have power in prayer. Here are the Bible principles we have discovered. To have power in prayer, you must

exercise unwavering faith in the God who answers prayer. To have power in prayer, you must come to God by the authority (in the name) of Jesus the Son of God. To have power in prayer, you must have a forgiving spirit and loving fellowship toward the people around you. To have power in prayer, you must pray in accord with God's will and for God's glory. To have power in prayer, you must deal honestly with God in keeping free from every sin. God set out those guidelines because he wants you to pray with power. He wants you to get what you ask in prayer. You can follow those guidelines, like you would follow the signposts in driving on the highway, and you will arrive at the goal of answered prayer because you will be blessed to pray in power.

“Father, thank you for the privilege of prayer. Thank you that you have made the way so plain that any person can walk in it. Thank you that many of us, following those guidelines, will enter into the blessed experience of power in prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.”