

First of All, Pray

In I Timothy 2:1, 2 the Bible says, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” The priority of prayer cannot be made strongly enough. Too many times prayer is the last item of business, the last thing we do when we have tried everything else. There is a cliché that says, “Why worry when you can pray?” I am convinced many people live with the attitude, “Why pray when you can worry?”

There are four specific approaches to God mentioned in I Timothy 2:1, 2:

(1) ADORATION

“Supplications” alludes to a humble, even kneeling approach before one who is considered a superior. We are commanded in Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Although we come boldly, we cannot escape the reverence due to God as “...KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16c). We find grace, mercy and help in time of need, but please notice we are coming to a throne!

(2) ATMOSPHERE

“Prayers” comes to us from the Greek word *proseuche* (from *pros* = toward or immediately before + *euchomai* = to pray or vow). Here is the connotation: Become close and intimate with God. And as we do, we are to present ourselves to Him as one who is making a vow of dedication. Prayer is more than a petition; it is an atmosphere.

(3) ACTION

“Intercessions” is from the Greek word “enteuxis” which means “a coming together,” thus, one who brings another’s needs to God. This is taking action on the behalf of another.

(4) ATTITUDE

“Giving of thanks...for all men.” Thankfulness is not to be left up to feelings; it is a matter of obedience.

A main reason we are living lives bereft of quietness and peace in all godliness and honesty is because of prayerlessness. God said in Ezekiel 22:30, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.” God is looking for prayer warriors to get in the secret place and plead with Him to have mercy on the people and land. God is looking for someone to stand in the gap before Him and negotiate in prayer for the souls of men, women, boys and girls.

This principle is laid down in Genesis 18:22-33 when Abraham stood before the LORD and requested that God would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for 50, 45, 40, 30, 20 and finally 10 righteous people. Sadly, there were not found even 10 righteous people in those wicked cities.

We observe in Exodus 32:31 and 32, “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” To show how powerful the prayer of Moses was, we read later on in Psalm 106:23, “Therefore He [God] said that he would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest he should destroy them.” This intercessory prayer of Moses saved the lives of upwards of 4 million people!

On the final entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem we read in Matthew 21:13, “... It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” We discover that Christ declares His house is to be **a House of Prayer**.

Matthew 21:12: “And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.” Previous to Christ’s declaration, we find that God illustrated that His house will never effectively become a house of prayer until it becomes **a House of Purity**.

Matthew 21:14: “And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.” Once the house of prayer is purified, it will become **a House of Power**.

Matthew 21:15, 16: “And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” God’s house has always been intended to be a place where the glory of God is manifested, thus we see our Lord is reminding the Pharisees that His house is to be **a House of Praise**.

In this dispensation, I Corinthians 6:19 informs us, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” An appropriate question to ask ourselves is, “Are our bodies houses of prayer?”

In the critical moment of Christ’s ministry, as He prays in Gethsemane, we find this penetrating question of our Lord to His disciples, “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40).

Praying for a good length of time will require discipline. And this is what the followers of the Lord Jesus are called: *disciples*. I believe you will find four stages you will go through as you become a prayer warrior.

Four Stages of Prayer

1. DREAD

Job 13:11-22: “Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with

your ears. Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified. Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee. Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me.”

2. DRUDGERY

Matthew 11:28-30: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

3. DUTY

Luke 17:10: “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

4. DELIGHT

Psalm 40:8: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.”

Romans 7:22: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

-Pastor Pope