

TAP INTO THE POWER OF PRAYER

All of us marvel at the many wonders of nature. One of those marvels is that of chemical energy. When we stop and think about it, it truly is amazing the power that is available from the fossil fuels and chemicals that we have available. The combustion of a gallon of petrol can propel a modern car some forty miles. The chemical energy available in an average dinner meal can keep us going for hours and hours. So much power is available from so little. Just as there is so much power available to us through chemical energy, so too is there great power available to us from God through prayer.

How effective do you feel your prayer life is? How would you rate it on a scale of 1 to 10? Do you feel like a weak battery not able to accomplish much?

How can we tap into the great power that is available to us through prayer? Here are five points that can help you.

1) Discuss everything with God.

We read in **Proverbs 3:5-6**: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In ALL thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

God wants us to discuss ALL of our plans and our ALL of our needs and desires with Him, not just some of them. Are we self-sufficient, only talking to God about some things and not everything?

Because the church is to marry Christ at His return, Christ is now courting those of us in His church. Christ is EAGER to get to know us intimately. That's how we should feel in our relationship with God.

Our Father, who is the King of the Universe, wants to be a close friend to each and every one of us. Do you talk to God and open up to Him about everything in your life as you would with your best friends?

Do you acknowledge Him in all your ways? Do you rely on Him and have faith He will answer you?

One of Christ's names mentioned in **Isaiah 9:6** is that of counsellor. Christ counsels and guides us through providential circumstances, through the scriptures, through the ministry and through the promptings of God's spirit within us. James tells us "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God...and it will be given to him" (**James 1:5**). If we want wisdom and the counsel and guidance of God, James tells us that we have to ask for it. If we don't ask for it, though, what chance do we have of receiving it?

Many of us ask God for big things that we have need of in life but when it comes to small matters we can easily assume that God isn't interested in those sort of things so we often don't pray about them.

In 1997 I kept the feast in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. On our way back from visiting Yellowstone National Park a couple of friends and I were talking with a friend of ours from New Jersey who related to us a number of stories where his prayers were answered. One story that he related was when he had a custom-made guitar made for him. He had never had a guitar custom-made. He was concerned about it and he wanted it to be just right.

Many of us wouldn't bother God with such a request but he prayed fervently for the job to turn out just right.

A few days later he received a call from the craftsman who made the guitar. The craftsman told him that he was so lucky because this job was the best job that he had ever done. Once constructed the guitar had to be painted. Again he prayed that the paint job would be just right. A few days later he received a call from the man who painted the guitar and would you believe that he told our friend the very same thing that the man who built the guitar had told him a few days earlier? The man who painted the guitar told him that this was the very best job that he had ever done.

Our friend told us quite a few other stories like this where he asked God for little things that you and I probably wouldn't think to bother God with. Our friend probably has no idea how those stories strengthened our faith and encouraged us to discuss ALL things with God, regardless of how small. **James 4:2** tells us that, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (NIV).

Many of us have staff benefits where we work. Often there are staff benefits we don't take advantage of because we don't know about them. The same can apply to us in the church. Those of us in the church have the incredible benefit of access to God and answers to prayer with so many things in our life, including the little things we've been discussing here. **Psalms 103:2** says that we should not forget ALL of His benefits. Make the most of that incredible access that you have to God.

If we encourage our children in the church to build a close friendship with God like they would have with their best friend and if they get answers to their prayers in all these big and little things we've been discussing here, it will give them encouragement to be close to God, live God's way and love being in God's church. **Answered prayer over the years can often be the difference between our children staying in the church or leaving it.**

2) Remember God is open to persuasion.

We read in **Exodus 32:9-14**: "the LORD said to Moses, 'I have seen this people and indeed it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore, let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.' Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: 'LORD why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak and say, "He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth"? Turn from your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to your people.

"Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, "I will multiply your descendants as the stars in heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" So the LORD relented from the harm which he said he would do to his people."

God wasn't bluffing when He said He wanted to destroy Israel. God said leave me alone so I can destroy them. Moses didn't leave God alone and pleaded to God with a logical case that led God to change His mind.

This incident begs a very important question. Why did God change His mind? Doesn't God know all and always knows what's best for us? If so, why did He change His mind?

Romans 8:28 tells us how everything works out for good to those who love God. Now God often has several options that He can use to work things out for us. As they say, there's more than one way to skin a cat. This is the most logical reason why God does change His mind from time to time and is open to persuasion.

God's will is more important than our will but our will still is important. God wants to know what our wants and wishes are and He is willing to let us have our own will at times if the options we are presenting to Him can also lead to what's best for us in the end.

In **Genesis 32:24-26** we read: "Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when he saw that he could not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, 'Let me go, for the day breaks.' But he said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me!'"

The One who became Jesus Christ wrestled with Jacob, put his hip out of joint and said to Jacob "Let me go". Jacob flatly refused to do what Christ asked and said "No, not until you bless me." Jacob, through his persistence, was granted his wish.

We could cite other examples such as Abraham bargaining with God not to destroy Sodom, starting at 50 righteous men in the city and going right down to 10 men, to prove the point that God is open to persuasion. We should come to God humbly and wrestle and persist until God's will and our will come together. Sometimes we will have to yield to God's best for us and at other times God will yield and change His mind, allowing us what we want.

3) Put your heart into your prayers.

God, through the prophet Hosea, told the Israelites why He often didn't answer their prayers when He said "they did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds" (**Hosea 7:14**).

God wants us to pour out our hearts to Him in our prayers. Ask yourself a couple of questions. If you were in God's shoes listening to your prayers would you find them interesting? Would you feel moved to respond?

When we come before the King of the Universe we should give God the best of our time, not the leftovers. We also need to show passion and zeal when presenting our requests before God. Think about how respectful you would be if you went before the President and how zealously and persuasively you would make your requests known to him if you were to seek his help on certain matters. God deserves to see that kind of respect and heartfelt zeal when you come before Him in prayer.

4) Be consistent.

Don't let a day go by without prayer! Without that consistent contact with God, where we ask for His help to overcome, we get out of shape spiritually and we become more susceptible to the world's influence and the temptations of the flesh. All of us who have been in the church for a while know how much weaker we become to the temptations of the flesh without contact with God for a day or two, yet it is so easy to let prayer go for a little while when we feel tired or we're very busy. **We need to pray daily because we need it!**

Prayer is vital. Just as a weak battery is recharged by a generator, we are also weak – yet recharged through prayer to God. Prayer recharges our faith, our hope, our positive attitude and with God's spirit that He gives to us.

Are we consistent also with our requests to God? Do you pray for things only once or twice and then forget about asking God for those things? Are the things on our prayer list things that we really do want? Our lack of persistence in asking for certain things often shows how little we want what we want.

5) Intercede for others.

In **1 Timothy 2:1** we read: "Therefore I exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men."

How much of your prayer time is devoted to your own concerns and needs and how much time do you pray for others?

God wants us to be givers. He wants us to take pleasure in giving to others as He takes pleasure in giving to us. Is this giving nature reflected in your prayers for others? When you pray for others you have given them time.

Be aware of what your friends and those around you have need of in their life and pray for them, both with the big things that they need, as well as the little things that would brighten up their life. Pray for the sick, those who are feeling down and are troubled you know about. Pray for God's work, His ministers and, most of all, pray for God's kingdom to come so that this world can be truly healed of all its many problems.

There is enormous power in prayer that's waiting there for us to tap into. Develop a close friendship with God through prayer and your life will be transformed by the greatest power source in the universe. Truly, the "effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (**James 5:16**).