

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Prayer

Being with God and Interacting with Him about All We Are Doing Together

- 1 - Jesus lived a life of prayer. He often withdrew from activity to be with his Father. In his humanity, prayer was the source of his strength.
- 2 - Jesus taught a life of prayer. He formed prayer in his disciples by example and teaching. Prayer is foundational to being his follower.
- 3 - The apostles lived and taught a life of prayer. It permeates the New Testament. They learned pray from Jesus. Prayer empowered the Church's birth and growth.
- 4 - Examine Judeo-Christian history. You will find no one who walked with God or accomplished great things for him who was not a man or woman of prayer.
- 5 - What is prayer? Prayer is interacting with God. I talk to him. I make requests. I listen to hear what he is saying to me. Prayer is two-way communication.
- 6 - There is something special about prayers we form using our own words. What father does not love to hear honoring words from his own child?
- 7 - But we do not know how to pray. We need the Holy Spirit to help us. (Romans 8:26) The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. (Luke 11:1)
- 8 - We also learn much about how to pray through prayers that have stood the test of time among God's people down through the centuries.
- 9 - The prayers of David (and others) in the Psalms have shaped the worship and prayers of our spiritual forefathers and mothers for millennia.
- 10 - The prayers of Jesus and his followers, found in the New Testament, laid the initial foundation for Christian worship and prayer.
- 11 - We have received a rich heritage in the prayers of Christian history, formed by ones who walked with God, representing every Christian tradition.
- 12 - Unaided, we can pray amiss. The heart may be innocent, but the understandings which form prayers may be wrong—even spiritually dark.

- 13 - Scripture includes repetition in prayer. (see Psalm 136) Repetition supports meditation, facilitating hearing God more thoroughly and accurately.
- 14 - Some equate prayer only with intercession. Intercessory prayer is certainly essential! Here we will focus on prayer as it relates to living in the Presence.
- 15 - Prayer is primary in practicing God's Presence. To learn how to live in God's Presence continually, we must learn how to pray continually.
- 16 - The biblical directive to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) seems unattainable. But it is a command. Let's ask the Lord to teach us how.
- 17 - "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Rejoicing, praying, giving thanks are to fill our lives.
- 18 - "Perfection" is different from "maturity". We will never be perfect in praying without ceasing, but we can increasingly mature toward it.
- 19 - Jesus directs us to abide in him. (John 15:5) He said apart from him we could do nothing. "To abide" means "to remain". Remain for how long?
- 20 - The Scriptures say we are to be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18) For how long? Is this just a one-off experience? Or a way of life?
- 21 - Praying without ceasing, abiding in Christ and being filled with the Spirit all point to one reality—living in continual communion with God.
- 22 - This is the condition for which we were created. We can re-learn this. But the old life must be brought to the cross that a new life may be formed.
- 23 - When we try to pray without ceasing, our mind wanders. Keeping our mind on anything involves learning to bring our mind continually back to it.
- 24 - To learn prayer as a lifestyle I practice shortening the intervals when my thoughts are not on God. I look for ways to bring my thoughts back more often.
- 25 - There is no "right" way to shorten the intervals between returning my thoughts to God, but history has many examples from which I can learn.
- 26 - In New Testament times the liturgical day in Judaism included set hours for prayer. (Acts 3:1) Cornelius, a Gentile, prayed them. (Acts 10:30)
- 27 - Cornelius was a Roman centurion, an army officer with 100 men under him. He had a busy schedule, but he "prayed continuously". (Acts 10:2)
- 28 - "Seven times a day I praise you" (Psalm 119:164) guided early Christian houses of prayer (monasteries) to set hours of prayer day and night.

29 - Historically seven hours of prayer have been used by Christian communities: upon rising, 6 am, 9 am, noon, 3 pm, 6 pm and before retiring.

30 - How can I develop a lifestyle of prayer? **(1)** Start with one prayer time a day. It can be short! Connect with God.

31 - In learning any discipline, we start where we are. Don't overdo. Attempting too much too soon will be counterproductive. Let habits of prayer develop naturally.

32 - The more we are with God, the deeper our desire to be with him will grow. Once one prayer time per day is established, **(2)** add a second one.

33 - Two prayer times a day might look like one in the morning and one in the evening. In time, **(3)** a third one might be added at noontime.

34 - A next step may be **(4)** to set the timer on our watch or phone to sound every so often—once an hour? Hearing it, we pause to speak briefly, quietly to the Lord.

35 - As I write this, my watch timer is sounding every five minutes. I pause for a 5-second prayer. I don't feel interrupted; I feel empowered.

36 - Each of us can discover unique ways to return our thoughts to God throughout the day for a 5-second prayer. Being with God will be transformative.