

INTRODUCTION

I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder... (2 Peter 1:13)

⁴ *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)*

⁶ *And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant— ⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:6-7, emphasis added)*

¹² *And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matthew 21:12-13, emphasis added)*

I. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE PRAY?

The impact of righteous, repentant, faith-filled prayer aligned with God’s heart in Christ:

- Prayer is where God promises to release joy to His people

⁷ *these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer... (Isaiah 56:7a)*

- Prayer causes healing to be released

¹⁴ *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up... (James 5:14-15, emphasis added)*

- Prayer enables deliverance from unclean spirits

¹⁷ *And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” ²⁴ ... he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” ²⁶ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out... ²⁸ his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹ And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.” (Mark 9:17-18, 24, 26, 28-29, emphasis added)*

- Prayer positions us to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, His supernatural gifts, and boldness to preach the Gospel

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. ... ¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4, emphasis added)

- Prayer positions us to receive prophetic vision and direction from God

¹ At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ² a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." ⁴ And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God." ⁵ And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." ⁹ The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰ And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance (a vision) ... ¹⁹ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." (Acts 10:1-5, 9-10, 19-20, emphasis)

- Prayer releases angelic activity and breakthrough in natural circumstances

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. ⁶ Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. ... ⁹ And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." (Acts 12:5-7,9-11, emphasis added)

- Prayer causes mercy and grace to be released

¹¹ But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴ And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. (Exodus 32:11-14, emphasis added)

¹⁸ Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you... ¹⁹ ...He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you. (Isaiah 30:18-19, NKJV, emphasis added)

- Prayer positions us for encounter with God that leads to a transformed and sanctified life

¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, declares the Lord... (Jeremiah 29:12-14a)

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. (2 Corinthians 3:18, emphasis added)

II. COMMON BARRIERS TO HAVING A PRAYER LIFE

- A wrong understanding of God’s sovereignty - “God is sovereign”, “What will be, will be”

A correct understanding of God’s sovereignty should cause us to want to pray and act, not withhold our prayers and actions. It’s because of God’s sovereignty that His people can have faith to pray and see His desirous will executed in the earth (Acts 4:29-31).

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-5, emphasis added)

- **The busy-ness of earthly pursuits - “I’m too busy to pray”, “God understands I’m busy”**

The enemy of our souls would love for us to stay so constantly busy that we never fulfill our God-given calling, and pose no threat to him. Even if he can’t tempt us to sin in outright obvious immorality, he’s fine distracting us and causing us to be so busy that we sin by disobeying our calling in the place of prayer, and ultimately miss obedience to God as a whole (James 4:17).

¹ Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”...⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.”...⁹ Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.” (Exodus 5:1, 4, 9)

We will often put off prayer until we finish everything else, but even our Savior knew the importance of prioritizing prayer before anything else. Jesus would even cease from impactful ministry to withdraw from others and connect with the Father in prayer.

³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” (Mark 1:35-37, emphasis added)

- **Addiction to stimulation of the flesh and instant gratification - “Prayer is boring”**

In modern American we live in a “fast food”, “buy now”, “no wait”, “same-day shipping”, “always-on”, “quick-fix”, “instant premiere”, “on-demand entertainment”, “what I want - when I want it”, kind of world; and this is detrimental to our souls. We have become addicted to selfish stimulations that rob us of godly relationships with others, and of our relationship with God. Self-inflicted tendencies toward instant gratification keep us from anything that might cause us the pain of slowing down or waiting. A biblical prayer life is a lot less like a microwaved meal that becomes cold and hard not long after a quick 60-second zap, and much more like a carefully crafted slow-cooked meal that simmers for hours and comes out hot, tender, and fragrant.

¹ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:1-8, emphasis added)

In these days he (Jesus) went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12, emphasis added)

- **Lack of discipleship or understanding of prayer - “I don’t know what to do”**

Many don’t pray because they simply don’t know what to say or do, or even feel that they will be judged by God or others if they pray “wrong”. Thankfully, our heavenly Father already knows what we need before we ask, so we don’t have to use fancy words to be heard or worry about what others think of our prayers (Matt. 6:5). God’s Word is like a handbook for prayer, and if we pray in agreement with His Word, we can have confidence in what we pray and ask of Him.

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 5:7-13)

III. SOME KEY FACETS OF PRAYER

- We see various forms of prayer set forth in the Scriptures. These types of prayer can be spoken, sung, cried, or even whispered, but all are forms of communication with God. As with all communication, listening is also key.

1. Thanksgiving and Praise

- a. Recognizing God’s goodness and blessings and thanking Him for them
- b. Exalting Him in praise for who He is and what He does
(Psalms 9:1-12; 30; 92; 100; 118; 138; 145; 1 Chron. 29:10-13; Eph. 5:18-20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:3; 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:18; Rev. 11:16-17)

2. Surrender and Agreement with God’s Word

- a. Honestly opening our heart and life to Him in prayer (getting real with God)
- b. Worship and agreement with what He says about Himself
- c. Agreement with what He says about us
- d. Agreement with what He says about others

3. Petition and Intercession

- a. Ask God to move according to His character/nature and promises that He’s revealed to us in His Word
- b. For our personal life: breakthrough of God’s glory (strength, favor, love, etc.) in me, in my circumstances (physical, financial, relational), and through my work/ministry with His power and revelation to help others
- c. For other people and places: individuals, ministries, marketplace and governmental authorities, and cities or nations
- d. For strategic social issues: justice, civil unrest and wars, natural disasters, disease, social/economic crisis, etc.

4. Listening and Conversation

- a. Ask questions and allowing Holy Spirit to remind us of God's Word (*John 14:26*)
- b. Meditating on God's word and asking Him to speak to our heart (*Psalms 1*)
- c. Be open to receiving supernatural revelation from the Lord, weighing it with His Word (*Acts 2:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; 1 Thess. 5:20-21*)

CONCLUSION – A CALL TO PRAYER

Prophetic word from the early days when Evident Life Church was first planted:

The roots of an Evident Life go DEEP

Discipleship
Evangelism
Encounter
Prayer

*“Prayer is the taproot of Evident Life Church”
– Pastor Eric Jones*

*⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸ He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)*

A Call to Prayer:

1. **Prioritize time in your calendar for individual prayer**
 1. Commit to a scheduled prayer time in a set-apart place
 2. Put away the distractions and push through the discomfort
 3. Digest some prayer resources
 4. Start praying!
2. **Prioritize time in your calendar for corporate prayer**
 1. Commit to join a corporate prayer meeting
 2. Find someone who has a focused prayer life and sit with them
 3. Pray along with those around you

Resources related to prayer are available at www.evidentlife.org/prayer