



Title: Connecting in Prayer

Theme: Five Truths to Success in Prayer

“If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” (John 15: 7)

When the child of God understands and submits to the Lord in Biblical prayer, he will find himself obeying God’s instructions to “pray continually”

Every child of God has gone through a dry period in prayer and some have never really been able to fully enjoy the success in prayer that the Lord Jesus wants them to experience. Many do not know what the heart attitude should be in coming to the Lord in prayer.

Others have discovered that prayer can change their life and allow them to participate in the most powerful ministry there is. It has been one of the key ministries that has delivered nations, brought healing into lives and brought souls to Christ.

I would propose to you that when the child of God understands and submits to the Lord in Biblical prayer, he will find himself obeying God’s instructions to “pray continually.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Just what are five Biblical truths that enable the child of God to enjoy success in prayer?

If Christians submit and cling to these truths, they can expect to see God, answer their prayers in a way that will glorify Jesus Christ in and through their lives.

The thrust to being successful in prayer is beautifully presented in the key word “remain” or better translated as “abide” in the New American Standard Bible. Therefore, it is a necessity that we understand what Jesus meant when He said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you...”

To “abide” (*meno*) as it is used in John 15:7 gives us the idea that the child of God has a heart that studies and learns the Word of God. This Christian’s thoughts, desires and motivations are birthed forth as he prayerfully reads the Bible. The application is that he remains united with Jesus Christ in mind, heart and will. It also has a command to hold on, to continue on, to keep obeying, to live on and rest in the everlasting loving arms of Christ. The purpose for this type of living is to cleanse the heart so as to do away with selfish prayers. The connection in “abiding” is maintained by obedience to the written Word of God.

I realize that analogies are imperfect, but let me try to use some human circumstances to bring some application into abiding in Christ.

Suppose there is a Christian who is easily overcome by temptation. Then suppose that there is another Christian who sees this brother continually falling and he intervenes by moving in with him. The stronger brother is always right there to make sure he does not fall into slumber, makes sure that he is eating the right foods, sleeping at the proper times and getting back a forth to work at the right time.

Thus, the weaker Christian is unable to be overcome by his temptation, because the stronger Christian is always right there protecting and giving strength to the weaker brother. As long as the stronger Christian keeps that contact the weaker Christian lives victoriously. However, as soon as contact is broken in any way that temptation rears its head again and defeat is at hand.

Defeat is sure, because the fact is that Christians cannot defeat the flesh, the world and discern the lies of the devil without the help of the eternal Friend, Jesus Christ, who sticks closer than a brother. Just as the weaker Christian needed the constant intervention of the stronger Christian, the child of God needs the constant intervention of the Spirit of Christ intervening in his life.

The fact is there are those people who just can't keep themselves pulled out of the gutter. I know of a man named, Jim Carr. He went into the streets of Kansas City, MO. and found a down and outer on the streets. He took him into his house, cleaned him up, fed him good food, and then he taught this homeless man all he knew about the business that he was in. The man did well, prospered, got his own home, and after a season of being away from the protecting hand of Jim Carr, he fell right back in to the gutter. He went back into the streets of Kansas City, MO.

The fact is, unless Christians are abiding in Christ and abiding in His words, they will not have the spiritual strength to keep themselves out of the gutter of the flesh, the world, and lies of the devil. Jesus Christ is the only one who can bring deliverance and the Word of God is the only food that can make and keep them spiritually healthy.

The Word of God is like that picture of the man, who helped another man get victory over sin. There was a preacher who was known as, Robertson of Brighten who helped a Mr. Kingsley recognize the dangers of sin and showed him the joys of honest living. The man became successful and was known by many as being honest, upright and dependable.

When asked how he was able to build and keep such a good name, the man said, "Whenever I was tempted to fall into wrong practices, I would just run to the picture of Pastor Robinson and the temptation was defeated. That picture reminded me that I have a friend."

The Word of God reveals to all that they have a Friend who gave His very life, for the redemption of mankind and He rose from the dead so Christians can have victory over sin and death. The connection is sacrificial love and abiding in Christ. It involves having a Biblical picture of what Jesus has and will do for you. Our Biblical picture of abiding is found in the relationship that Jesus had with His Father. Jesus was in contact with God; again and again Jesus withdrew into a solitary place to meet with God in prayer.

Christians must follow the example of Christ. They must deliberately take steps to establish and maintain a constant relationship with the Lord Jesus. By arranging life so as to be prayerfully reading and studying the Word of God so they can give attention to it. They must be continuously in prayer, throughout the day, so they can meditate on what Jesus is telling them to get done. They must be in humble prayer asking for the will to obey and the strength to endure.

A final note on this important topic is that there are foundational truths that must be grasped in having success in abiding in Christ. One, the Christian must enrich his own life by having an ongoing surrendered relationship with Jesus Christ. Two, his prayers are to be for the glory of Jesus Christ alone. As he prays with this in his mind and heart, the results of his prayer life turn men's hearts to God and Christ.

There are three questions that are constantly asked by those who are successful in prayer. 1.) Do I admit and confess the wrong that the Holy Spirit reveals to me is offensive to the Lord? 1 John 1:8 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." 2.) Am I presently ignoring God's Word and avoiding His Biblical principles for living? 1 John 3:21-22 says, "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him." 3.) Do I really want to surrender to God's will for my life? 1 John 5:14-15 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him."

You must have a faith that Christ will answer your prayer in accordance to His Father's will and you must have a forgiving attitude toward others

The first step to Christians connecting with God in prayer is to be honest with themselves. Do they live in a way that reflects a life of abiding in Christ? Jesus Christ gives us another truth to connecting with God in prayer. He says in Mark 11:24-25, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." One, you must have a faith that Christ will answer your prayer in accordance to His Father's will and two, you must have a forgiving attitude toward others.

Number one characteristic to being successful in prayer is to have faith and the second is to have a forgiving heart. Jesus is very direct on this matter of forgiveness, because resentment will kill your ability to keep your mind and heart steadfast during prayer.

In Matthew 6 Jesus taught that when we pray we should ask, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12) Christians can not hold unforgiveness in their hearts and expect to enjoy success and remain connected to God in prayer. A heart that can forgive others is a heart that receives forgiveness from God and keeps itself aright in prayer.

The Christian who wants to be successful in prayer must learn what Jesus taught Andrew Lang. Andrew Lang was a famous Scottish man of letters. He once wrote a very kind review of a book that was written by a young man who thought of nothing but himself. The young man repaid Mr. Lang with a bitter and insulting attack. About three years later Robert Bridges, a poet saw Mr. Lang reading a book. Robert Bridges said, “Why, that is another book written by that ungrateful young writer who behaved so shamefully to you.”

To the astonishment of Mr. Bridges, Andrew Lang’s mind was a blank on the whole matter. Andrew Lang had completely forgotten the bitter and insulting attack. Robert Bridges wrote, “To forgive is the sign of a great man, but to forget is sublime. Nothing but the cleansing Spirit of Christ can take from these memories of ours the old bitterness that we must forget.”

Do you rely on the Holy Spirit to cleanse your heart and keep the root of bitterness out so you can be successful and connect in prayer to God?

What is our purpose to having God answer the prayers we pray?

Being connected in prayer means that you must have a compassionate heart to the needs of those who cry out for help. Proverbs 12:13 says, “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.”

There is a fact of life, if Christians expect God to bless them, they must be willing to bless those who have needs with whatever God has given them. Jesus wants us to be like Him and His view of the church is found in James 1:27 and it says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows...” If Christians ignore those who have obvious needs, what right do they have to praying to God about their own needs?

Obedient Christians are God’s channels to meeting the needs of the poor in a way that draws attention to Christ. The reason you should ask God to bless your business or bless you in the work place is so that you cannot only provide for yourselves. But so you can bless Him and reach out to the needs of the poor.

I recently read a story about a man who was a multi-multi-multi-millionaire. Pastor Rick Warren had visited with this man who just a few years ago went bankrupt. After going through this severe trial this man received the Holy Spirit gift of giving. He allowed the Holy Spirit to give him the revelation of hilarious giving, which is New Testament teaching.

This man now gives 97% of his income to the Lord's work, which includes meeting the needs of the poor. He lives on 3% of his income and still lives a higher standard of life than most of the people in this country.

He found the necessity of obedience to the tithe, then, he was illuminated to the truth that he could not out give God. He went from the joyful surrender of 10% to 20% to 30% and is now at 97% and he lives a very wealthy life style. This man had come to the realization that his purpose in this world was to be a blessing to others.

This leads to the obvious question, "What is our purpose to having God answer the prayers we pray?"

If we want to be connected to God in prayer, we must pray that God will make us a blessing to others. Then we must believe that God will answer prayer and never take our authority in Christ for granted. James 1:5-7 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord..."

James is writing in the context of trials and temptations here. The idea is when these trials and temptations have run their course the child of God will not lack the virtues and strengths that must be found in the man who wants to connect with God in prayer. It is during these trials and temptations the child of God will get all the wisdom he needs, and God is not going to reject His needy children because of any faults. It is assumed that while a child of God is going through trials and temptations, he lacks wisdom, and God would freely give it upon the asking.

Although there is nothing more God wants more than to give wisdom and meet the needs of His children, there is a barrier that could arise within them. When Christians ask, they "must believe" and not have any doubt. Their faith must be more than mere acceptance or a creed. To believe here means to be confident that God will give what is requested and it is to be expected that He will do so.

It is to believe it when He says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrew 13:5b) God's people are secure no matter what comes their way, so there is no need to use the world's way of doing things. It is to believe it when he said "...and surely I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) Christians are to go forth in the Great Commission in confidence that Jesus is in sovereign control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Matthew's Gospel does not end with a command, but a promise and there is a truth that must be grasped in the Greek word for "always" (*pasa tes hemeras*), strictly meaning "the whole of every day." This suggests that Christ's continued presence is with us "day in and day out" no matter what troubles or difficulties may come.

Let me caution you, even though we have Christ's promise to be with us and the Holy Spirit is in us and He has given us gifts so we can fulfill our callings, there is a warning I would like to present to you. We must not become so confident in what the Lord has given us that we exercise our gifts in our power and not continually to beseech the Lord Jesus in prayer at all times.

Let me show you what happens when we take the wrong approach to doing the Lord's work. In Mark chapter 9:14-29 we read of a boy that had an evil spirit.

When Jesus approached the crowd they were arguing with Jesus disciples. After Jesus ask the question of why this argument, a man in the crowd answered, saying, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." (Mark 9:17-19)

As you continue to read of this Biblical account you will come to Mark 9: 28-29 and you see why the disciple could not cast the demon out. It says in the New American Standard Bible, "And when He [Jesus] had come into the house, His disciples began to question Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out.'" In verse 29 Jesus gives the answer, "...This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

The reason why the disciples asked this question was because the disciples knew that they had been given authority over evil spirits. (Mark 6:7) The Bible says, "...they drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them." (Mark 6:13) Jesus had to remind them of their need to be in prayer here.

If they would have been faithful to come to God in prayer, why did Jesus draw their attention back to prayer? It is because they had apparently taken for granted the power given them and were relying on past experiences. They stopped depending on a prayerful approach to God's work and were no longer following the example Jesus sat before them. They no longer nurtured their authority and gifts in prayer.

This is why spiritual leaders must take time to draw their congregations back to prayer and make time for prayer for the work of God in the church they oversee.

It is all too easy to claim the truths found in Scripture such as "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) and not truly be blanketing everything we do in true heartfelt prayer. There is way too much proclaiming truths found in God's Word and not near enough discipline in praying for those truths to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The phrase "in My Name" is not to be used as a charm for the command of supernatural energy. He did not wish it to be used as a magical charm like a rabbit's foot hung around a neck

Once you have it deep within your heart that God answers all prayers offered up for the glory of Christ, you must pray in Jesus' name if you want to connect with God in prayer.

Jesus said, "I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it." (John 14:13-14)

The power of the disciples originated in prayer, therefore, Jesus could not have made a more powerful declaration in saying, whatever they should ask in His name, He would do. The phrase "in My Name" is not to be used as a charm for the command of supernatural energy. He did not wish it to be used as a magical charm like a rabbit's foot hung around a neck. It is both a guarantee, like the endorsement on a check, and yet as a limitation on the petition; for He would grant only that petition that is consistent with His character and purpose. In prayer we are to call on Him to carry out His purposes, not our purposes.

The key to connecting in prayer with God is to honestly ask, "Am I really offering this prayer in Jesus' name?" No one can ask for some unworthy thing or object that has no purpose of glorifying Christ in his life and in the lives of all he comes in contact with. The prayer that connects with God ends with "Thy will be done." When this last truth is fully placed within a man's heart and being lived out in his life, he may come before the "Throne of Grace" with boldness.

It is somewhat like the man who took his son and several of his son's friends to the county fair for celebrating his son's homecoming after being a long time away from home because of an illness. He bought lots of tickets and he stood in front of every ride and every game and passed tickets out to each child that was involved in the celebration. As he was passing out the tickets, he all of a sudden noticed that there was a child that he had never seen before, standing with a hand out. The man asked, "Are you involved in my son's celebration party?" "No," said the young child. "Then why should I give you a ticket?" The little boy pointed at the man's son and said, "Your son said you would give me one." So the man did.

The point is that God's Son took upon himself the results of sin and after dying upon the Cross of Calvary, He rose on the third day and he is now at the right hand of God His Father. Jesus says when we come in prayer in His name and for His purposes we as Christians will be given entrance simply because of what Christ did for us and the price has already been paid.

There are five truths to connecting in prayer 1.) Christians must be abiding in Christ. 2.) Have a forgiving heart. 3.) Have a compassionate heart to the needs of others. 4.) Believe that God will answer prayer and 5.) Pray in Jesus' Name.

Let us Pray!