

## PRAY MORE

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Matthew 6:5-13

1. In relationship to their daily walk and love for their brothers and sisters in Christ, Paul wrote the following to the Thessalonians.
  - a. 1 Thess 4:1-2  
Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you **excel still more**.
  - b. 1 Thess 4:9-10  
Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to **excel still more**.
2. As Christians we ought to pursue excellence in all areas of life as an act of worship and because, in Jesus Christ, we can and therefore should.
3. From a spiritual perspective we are to be extra-ordinary or distinctively different from those with whom we rub elbows.
4. Jesus pointed out that the visible church would eventually be characterized by a pervasive form of mediocrity. Rev 3:15-16  
“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”
5. At times we Christians are guilty of being somewhat contradictory.
  - a. We confess Jesus as Lord and yet do not obey Him. Luke 6:46-47  
“Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?”
  - b. Also what comes out of our mouths can be a contradiction. James 3:8-12  
“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. **My brethren, these things ought not to be this way**. 11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.
  - c. Many profess to believe in the power of prayer and yet give little time and effort to becoming effective prayer warriors.
  - d. We insist that the Bible is the written word of God and the Sword of the Spirit, which it is, while leaving it to preachers and teachers to actually read and study it.  
NOTE: I am embarrassed to say that I was a preacher for a number of years before I actually read the Bible through from cover to cover, and I expect that I was not alone. God convicted me that I needed to be in the word for my own sake, and not just for the sake of others. Since then I have made it a point to read through the Bible devotionally each year and have been blessed by doing so.

- e. We rejoice in the fact that we are saved while, at the same time, not cooperating with God in the area of spiritual growth or development (sanctification).
  - f. We believe that people are lost apart from Jesus Christ while living a life that shows little concern for their souls.
6. If any of these statements apply to us personally we need to take the matter up with God in prayer.
  7. The passage before us will help us get started if we really want to become prayer warriors.
  8. Note a few things Jesus had to say about prayer.

### **I. When you pray.**

- A. Note Jesus did not say if you pray, but when you pray.
  - B. He assumed His true disciples would be men and women whose lives would be characterized by prayerfulness.
  - C. I once heard a preacher say, "Many of our 'ifs'" should be 'whens' and our 'whens' should be 'ifs'."
  - D. All of our priorities in life are "whens" and not "ifs."
- NOTE: We focus on and invest time in the things that are important to us, while at the same time we get around to other things if we have time. For many, spiritual disciplines fall into the if category.

### **II. When you pray get alone with God.**

- A. Jesus was not suggesting that public or group prayer was wrong.
  - B. Rather He was emphasizing the importance of His followers shutting out distractions and getting alone with God for extended periods of time just as He did.
- Luke 5:16

But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 **But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.**

- C. Even a casual reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus often prayed alone.
  1. When He needed strength and direction from the Father. Mark 1:35-39
 

In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. 36 Simon and his companions searched for Him; 37 they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." 39 And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.
  2. Prior to making a major decision. Luke 6:12-16
 

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

3. For the Apostles and those who would come to Him through them. John 17
4. As He faced the Cross. Luke 22:39-46

And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. 40 When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." 43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. 45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

- D. Jesus pointed out that what took place in private would have public ramifications.
  1. Years ago I wrote the following in my journal.

“The impact of our public life before men will never rise above the quality of our private life before God.”
  2. Oswald Chambers wrote, “The measure of the worth of our public activity for God is the private, profound communion we have with Him.”

### III. When you pray really pray.

- A. Do not pray to impress others and do not refrain from praying because of others.
- B. Do not use meaningless repetition.

NOTE: The key word here is “meaningless” since Jesus taught elsewhere that we should persevere in our praying.

C. A lot of conversations are meaningless in that it would not really matter if they had never taken place, while other conversations have value because something of importance is communicated.

**NOTE: So I won't be misunderstood I do believe that casual conversation does play an important role in relationship building.**

D. True prayer should be genuine and heartfelt and involve the intellect, the emotions, and the will.

E. Psalm 62: 8 says, “Trust in Him (God) at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”

NOTE: I like the Amplified Version's rendering of this verse.

“Trust in, lean on, rely on, and have confidence in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him.”

### IV. When you pray be concise.

- A. In other words say what you mean and mean what you say.
- B. Jesus' model prayer provides us an example of concise praying.
- C. The content of the Model Prayer is suggestive as well.
  1. Our praying should reveal our desire to see God's name hallowed and His person glorified.
  2. Our praying should reveal our desire to see God's kingdom advanced and His will accomplished in our lives, in the lives of others, and upon this whole earth.

3. Our praying should reflect the fact that we are looking to God as our Source.
4. Our praying should reflect our understanding that our fellowship with the Father is dependent upon our actions and attitudes towards others. (See Matthew 6:14-15)
5. Our praying should reveal our confidence in God's ability to enable us to overcome temptation and resist the Evil One.

### **APPLICATION**

1. The Bible is our source related to the subject of prayer.
  - a. The Bible teaches that we are to pray without ceasing.
  - b. The Bible tells us how to pray, what to pray about, and who to pray for.
  - c. The Bible is filled with examples of how people prayed and what happened when they prayed.
  - d. The Bible is filled with promises related to prayer.
3. Becoming a true prayer-warrior does not just happen.
4. Will you join me in making it your goal to excel still more in the area of prayer?
5. Our lives and the lives of others will benefit greatly if we do.
6. More importantly God's kingdom will be advanced.