



**On God, Prayer
And His Will For Your Life
By
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Teaching Notes are Bible studies we taught before GraceLife Ministries began publishing articles online in 1995. Some were presented as sermons, others as group studies.

Our hope is that these older studies will be a blessing to you in your life and ministry. Please use them in any way God leads you.

[These notes are from a Bible study taught more than 40 years ago. The notes are in outline form.]

Searching for the Knowledge of God

Prov. 2:5 – “Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

Personal survey of major problems among Christians:

- 1 Having the fear of God
- 2 Having the knowledge of God (Proverbs. 1:7)

Steps to finding the knowledge of God:

1. Prov. 2:1 – Spiritual receptivity
 - Matt. 13:23 (understanding)
 - Acts 2:41 (joy)
 - Acts 17:11 (readiness of mind)
 - 1 Thessalonians. 2:13 (the Word of God)
2. Prov. 2:1 – Hiding the commandments of God
 - Psalm 37:31 (keep from sliding)
 - Psalm 40:8 (a delight to the heart)
 - Jer. 31:33
 - Rom. 7:22

- II Cor. 3:3

- 3. Prov. 2:2 – Inclining the ear to wisdom

- 4. Prov. 2:2 – Apply your heart to understanding

- 5. Prov. 2:3 – Crying after knowledge .. Lifting up the voice of understanding

- 6. Prov. 2:4 – Seeking it as silver .. searching for it as hid treasure

Promise to seekers:

- Deut. 4:29 (Find God)
- II Chron. 7:14 (Forgiveness)
- Prov. 8:17 (Find God)
- Prov. 2:5 (Find knowledge)

The Enter-Rest Dynamic of Prayer

I had the privilege of producing several Christian radio programs during the 1970s. God saved me from atheism when I worked in radio, so it was a wonderful opportunity to be involved in Christian radio for several years.

I began producing programs within months of becoming a Christian, so my work in Christian radio was primarily as a producer and announcer. I worked with several excellent Bible teachers and evangelists to produce their radio programs and schedule airplay on a network of stations in both North and South America.

I also had the opportunity to teach on the radio programs from time to time and these notes are from one of those programs.

Prayer is the most powerful force known to man. It can move mountains, change lives, heal the sick, save the lost.

Prayer in its simplest form is “talking with God.”

The power of prayer comes not from the one who prays, but the One who hears and answers prayer...the Almighty God.

Therefore, we must be sure to pray according to His wishes and desires.

What is the secret to powerful prayer? Where do we go to find the divine example and teaching? Turn with me to Matt. 6:5-8 –

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

In these four verses, Jesus Christ presents the enter-rest dynamic of prayer. Here we have unveiled to us the deep mystery of talking with God. The enter-rest dynamic is a very positive principle concerning prayer, but before we can see the positive “do’s,” we must first learn the negative “don’ts.”

I. Don’t be like the hypocrites – verse 5

A. What is a hypocrite? “A person who pretends to be better than he really is...pretending to be pious or virtuous without really being so.”

B. What then is a hypocritical prayer? “A prayer offered by a person who pretends to be something he isn’t.”

C. What are some of the characteristics of a hypocrite in prayer?

- 1 “They love to pray standing.”
- 2 “That they may be seen.”

D. What is the danger of this kind of praying? “Interest in self.”

II. Don't use vain repetitions – verse 7

A. What are vain repetitious prayers? “Prayers with empty words, void of results.”

B. What are some of the characteristics of vain repetitious prayers?

- 1 They're formal, just like heathens pray.
- 2 “They think that they shall be heard.”

C. What is the danger of this kind of praying? “Dependence in self.”

Now let's look at the two positive principles in the enter-rest dynamic of prayer.

I. Enter into God's presence – verse 6

A. "Enter" into the presence of Almighty God.

- 1 Enter with thanksgiving and praise.
- 2 Enter with clean hands and a pure heart.
- 3 Enter with a broken and contrite heart.

B. "Shut" out the material things of this world.

1 Shut out personal ambitions and desires (lust)

- 2 Shut out the devil.

C. "Pray" for others and the glory of God.

- 1 Pray specifically
- 2 Pray honestly
- 3 Pray sincerely
- 4 Pray humbly

D. Your reward for this type of prayer? "... thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

II. Rest in God's Sovereignty – verse 8

A. Rest in His Love

B. Rest in His Mercy

C. Rest in His Kindness

D. Rest in His Goodness

E. Rest in His Knowledge – "... your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

When Men Pray

We presented these thoughts on the subject of praying men to a men's prayer breakfast in the mid-1970's. We invite you to use these notes in any way God leads you.

As I prayed and thought about this time of sharing with you on the subject of prayer, especially for the upcoming crusade, my mind began sifting through all the verses I've been exposed to on prayer. I thought about the prayers of the great saints of ages past...I thought of the prayers of Paul in his epistles...I thought of the heart-stirring prayers of Jesus in the garden... and then my mind rested on one of the most fascinating Scriptures on prayer in the Bible, James 5:16-18:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

In verses 15 and 16, the words pray and prayer are used three times. However, they originate with three different Greek words. The “prayer” of verse 15 speaks of a vow while the “pray” of verse 16 is a sacred prayer to God for general benefits. But I want especially to look at the word “prayer” at the close of verse 16. The prayer here is a sacred prayer to God for specific or particular benefits.

[Give examples of specific prayers.]

There are two things that are inherent in this type of prayer. First, there is the existence of a need, and second, there is the expression of that need. God knows whether we have a real need or if it's just a selfish desire. As you and I pray for the crusade, we must be specific in our requests but we must also pray with pure motives.

[Examples of whether we are praying for the glory of man or the glory of God.]

I. WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THIS TYPE OF PRAYER?

It must be effectual and fervent. This is one word in the Greek and is in the passive voice. Prayer is effectual because of the energy of God not because of our energies. It's fervent because of God's fervency. In other words, do we make prayer happen because of our working at it or because of God's sovereignty? Are prayers answered because it's according to our

will or because it's in accordance to the will of God? When the sovereign God puts His eternal energy behind our prayers, things happen.

II. WHAT IS THE QUALIFICATION OF THE PERSON MAKING THE PRAYER?

The Scripture says "a righteous man." The one praying is qualified by the word righteous. How then do we approach a holy God when our righteousness is as filthy rags? Certainly not through anything that we have done. We approach God on the merit of Jesus Christ. It is being in Christ that makes us righteous. We must be totally lost in Christ, lost in His will. The Scriptures speak of God giving us the "desires of our hearts." When our desires are His desires He will most certainly give us what we desire. When we pray according to His will, we most certainly will receive what we have prayed for.

III. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF THIS PRAYER?

It avails much. Look at verses 17 and 18.

Was Elijah powerful in his prayer because he was a super human being? No. He was just like you and me, but he totally submitted himself to the will of God.

If this crusade is a success, it will not be because of our amassing committees...it will be because of our amazing Christ.

It will not be our first-rate promotion...it will be God's First-Person Power.

It will not be our ideal organization...It will be our instant obedience.

It will not be our professional presentations...It will be God's powerful probing.

It will not be our educated counseling...It will be God's effectual calling.

In God there is success...out of God there is defeat. Jesus said, "without me ye can do nothing."

How To Know God's Will For Your Life

I. God's written will

A. Positive commands (example – Mark 16:15)

B. Negative commands (example – 2 Cor. 6:14)

II. God's unwritten will

A. Prerequisites for Divine guidance

- 1 An obedience to the written will of God
- 2 A willingness to do God's will before you know it. (Romans 8:32)
- 3 A willingness to suffer for Christ's sake.
- 4 A clear conscience from past sins.

B. Sources of Divine guidance

CHART

- 1 God's Word
- 2 Prayer
- 3 People
- 4 Circumstance

III. Finding God's work for your life

- A. Follow your interests and abilities
- B. Cultivate many interests
- C. Be open to change

IV. Common misconceptions about God's will

- A. "Well, this is something I really want to do, so it can't possibly be God's will."
- B. "I haven't gotten a definite answer yet for every part of the problem, so I'm not going to do anything"
- C. "From everything I've heard, God's will must be something wild and bizarre."
- D. "Well, Lord, I've decided that the best way I can serve you is _____."
- E. "Boy, everything is just moonlight and roses, so I must be in God's will."
- F. "I've disobeyed the Lord. I missed His will sometime ago, so I'm doomed to second best."

V. Seven ways to miss God's will for your life

- 1 Follow sensual desires – James 4:1
- 2 Put yourself first – James 4:2
- 3 Pray with the wrong motive – James 4:3
- 4 Choose the wrong friends – James 4:4
- 5 Fail to confess known sin – James 4:8
- 6 Refuse to be humble – James 4:10
- 7 Reject the grace of God – James 4:13-17

[Thank you for reading these teaching notes from more than 40 years ago.
My prayer is they will be a blessing to you, your family and your ministry.]