HOW TO PRAY EFFECTIVELY WHILE BUILDING YOUR FAITH AS A BELIEVER

Introduction

An effective prayer life is necessary in our walk with God. Not only do we need to pray in faith believing what we petition for is heard but that it will also be answered. When a prayer is answered, we benefit from not only the answer, but our faith / trust in God will grow from the experience. When you see the answers to your prayer take place this will inspire you to dedicate even more time in prayer. Our relationship with God is a two-way street and when we draw close to him, He will draw close to us. The spiritual rewards of this cannot be overstated.

 In this podcast, we are going to look at some examples of prayers in the Old and New Testaments where the person or persons prayed and an answer was given.

 Also, the book of Psalms is a good example of prayer but cast in the form of worship songs.

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Pre-Prayer Checklist

Pre-prayer checklist

- 1. Fasting and other means of self abasement are a means to show God your resolve and determination for an answer.
- 2. While an ideal location and environment for prayer is not always possible, a prayer warrior must have a special location(s) in which to seclude themselves away from distractions and that fosters an air of reverence and focus on God. This does not mean we are not to pray for people or concerns in less than ideal locations, just that the more focused we are on the prayer and in listening to God, the better the prayer will tend to be.

Pre-prayer checklist

3. A person should be clean and not sweaty / or dirty before they spend time with the Lord if possible. This may not be possible if you are out camping / hiking in the wilderness. I only mention this because it can be a distraction to your focus. If you just got in from mowing the lawn for example, it would be better to shower and wear something clean before prayer. I want to iterate that this is in reference to praying in an ideal situation. Does God care about your hygiene when you pray to him? I believe He does though if nothing else it removes what could be a distraction when focusing on him.

Pre-prayer checklist

Fasting and self denial / self abasement are important parts of an effective prayer life. This aspect to an effective prayer life is very neglected today. While there are ritual fastings (such as during lent), these are meaningless as the motivation for the fast is purely ritualistic. For self denial actions to work they must be driven by desire for an answer from God. Self abasement is a means to show God that you are willing to subject yourself to hardship for an answer to a prayer request that is very important to you. If we have a profound need of an answer from God and yet cannot deny our own fleshly desires, then is the answer really that important to us? God sees our true heart and our actions may speak as loud (or louder) than what we say.

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #1 - Fasting and other means of self abasement are also means to show God your resolve and determination for an answer.

Examples

Daniel 9:3

"And I set my face to the Lord-God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:"

While we do not put on sackcloth and ashes (excluding lent), or tearing our clothes (to rend) in today's culture, nothing should preclude us from doing it along with fasting! Self abasement is important for humbling our spirit before the Almighty. The extent of the fast (doing without food and / or water) and any other measures to humble our flesh depends on how dire the answer we need from God is. Anointing oneself with oil was still practiced in the N.T. times. James 5:14

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #1 - Fasting and other means of self abasement are a means to show God your resolve and determination for an answer.

* Sackcloth (from the Hebrew word שק / sak) was a course material normally made from the worst wool or fiber that was loose enough to let liquids pass through easily. It would chafe the skin if next to it. It was all that the prophet Isaiah wore. When God told him to take off his sackcloth and shoes, for the period of three years he walked around naked and barefoot (Isaiah 20:3). In ancient times they really understood self abasement and not only fasted, but tore or rent their clothes (which ever part was made by hand and very labor intensive). Sackcloth was usually worn around the waist but could also be a primary garment or a loin cloth. On top of this they would throw ashes on their head. While this depth of self abasement is not done today, it will all depend on your need for an answer to how far you choose to go.

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #1 Continued - Fasting and other means of self abasement are a means to show God your resolve and determination for an answer.

<u>Examples</u>

Daniel 9:21-23 – Then the answer came.

"while I was still praying, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and spoke with me, saying: "O Daniel, I have come now to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your petitions, an answer went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly precious. So, consider the message and understand the vision:"

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #1 Continued - Fasting and other means of self abasement are a means to show God your resolve and determination for an answer. Daniel 9:21-23 – The answer came.

Even though the answer to Daniel prayer came immediately, Gabriel was thwarted 21 days before Daniel heard the answer.

James 1:3,4

"Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing."

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #1 Continued – Some people think that fasting must mean not eating anything but that is not necessarily the case. It may, but it may mean abstinence from anything you normally desire to eat. The extent of fasting and the duration is contingent on us and our need for an answer.

<u>Examples</u>

Daniel 10:2-3 – Daniel fasts again for 3 weeks. "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #1 Continued - Fasting

<mark>Examples</mark>

Both Moses and the Lord fasted for 40 days. Moses even did this 2x in a row. These are the most extreme and special situations that required God to sustain them physically during the fast. You should not attempt this unless you are in a "burning bush" type of situation!

I hesitated to even mention this long of a fast because fasting for this duration can be dangerous to your health without God's intervention. If you are spiritual enough to do this, you do not need this podcast to tell you when or how to pray.

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #2 – A quiet location where you can pray undisturbed is important for focus.

<mark>Examples</mark>

Daniel 6:7-11

"All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellers, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee. O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God."

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #2 Continued – A quiet location where you can pray undisturbed is important for focus. While we will get into impromptu prayers and how that is different than what we are talking about here, this location(s) are for your personal prayer time.

The location(s) you select should be treated with extreme respect. I personally do not wear my shoes into my prayer location. Why? Because I believe we must treat it as our "holy place" in which to meet the Lord spiritually. Moses had to remove his shoes in the presense of God at the burning bush and we can learn from this that shoes represent our travels through the world laden with sin. As the dust can get on our shoes, so can sin infect our lives. We are removing that from our / his presense by removing the symbolic reference with our shoes.

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #2 Continued – A quiet location where you can pray undisturbed is important for focus.

<mark>Examples</mark>

Mathew 14:22,23

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him to the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone."

The Lord separated himself after the feeding of the 5000 and went up into a close mountain to pray. He went up into a mountain to pray by himself routinely. This was his quiet location and I think that not only was this his "prayer closet" but that He met with angels there.

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #2 Continued – A quiet location where you can pray undisturbed is important for focus.

Examples

Mark 1:35

"Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and slipped out to a solitary place to pray." Luke 5:15,16

"But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear Him and to be healed by Him of their sicknesses. Yet He frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray."

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #2 Continued – A quiet location where you can pray undisturbed is important for focus.

<mark>Examples</mark>

Luke 6:11,12

"But the scribes and Pharisees were fitted with rage and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. In those days went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the night in prayer to God."

Notice that not only the location was important to the Lord but the duration. We should not be quick in our prayers either. There is a lot to discuss with the Lord, especially in these later days.

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #2 Continued – A quiet location where you can pray undisturbed is important for focus.

<u>Examples</u>

Luke 9:28-31

"About eight days after Jesus had said these things, He took with Him Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became radiantly white. Suddenly two men, Moses and Elijah, began talking with Jesus. They appeared in glory and spoke about His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

While this is the first time that Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him, I am sure that the supernatural happened all the time when Yeshua went up into the mountains to pray.

My point in all of this is that location is IMPORTANT to get away from all distractions and people. Does this make you want to go pray in the mountains? ;-)

Pre-prayer checklist

Point #3 – A person should be clean and washed IF possible before prayer. This is only a suggestion but I think it is worth mentioning. There are many cases where we read about washing in the temple (the brass laver) in the old testament, there are few examples in the N.T. except in the foot washing that was routinely done. However, it can be a point of distraction so I thought it good that if you and your clothes clean before prayer time then it can only benefit your prayer life.

<mark>Examples</mark>

Exodus 9:10

"And the LORD said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them to day and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes"

End of Part #1

Part #2 An Effective Prayer Life

The Prayer Contents

- 1. Acknowledge that you are speaking to the one true God of Heaven and Earth and our creator and begin your prayer with worship.
- 2. God is holy and expects the person praying to acknowledge that and if there is unconfessed sin confess it to him before asking any petition. Acknowledge the work that Christ has done in the forgiveness of our sins and the continued work of the Holy Spirit within us to fashion us as the "son's of God" that we are meant to be.
- 3. Be "in the spirit" when you pray. You must focus your attention toward heaven and not toward the ground, people around you, or to be unfocused / distracted.

The Prayer Contents

- 4. Be <u>specific</u> in your prayer about what is needed and do not waver in your request(s).
- 5. Be PATIENT. God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will be when best needed and in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!
- 6. The more people who agree with you in prayer, the stronger your point will be with God.
- 7. Listen to the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayer. If you do not have specific instructions, pray according to an empathetic response to the situtuation. God is love. The prayer request should be motivated by love. This is God's will in any situation.

Point #1- "Acknowledge that you are speaking to the one true God of Heaven and Earth and our creator and begin your prayer with worship". A suggestion would be to read a Psalms at the beginning of your prayer.

<u>Examples</u>

Mathew 6:9

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed (separated from profane things and to be rendered for holy use) be Your name"

• Daniel 9:4

"O, Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of loving devotion to those who love Him and keep His commandments"

Point #1 Continued- "Acknowledge that you are speaking to the one true God of Heaven and Earth and our creator and begin your prayer with worship".

Examples

Psalms 9:1,2

"I will praise you, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in you: I will sing praise to your name, O you most High."

We should start our prayer by praising God and his power, magnificence, and mercy.

Point #2- "God is holy and expects the person praying to acknowledge that and if there is unconfessed sin confess it to him".

Examples

James 5:16 "Confess your trespasses to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed"

We should also acknowledge our trust in him while humbling admitting to our own limitations and failures

Point #2- "Acknowledge the work that Christ has done in the forgiveness of our sins and the continued work of the Holy Spirit within us to fashion us as the "sons of God" that we are meant to

Example Mark 11:25

"And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against anyone; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Unconfessed sin in our lives can lead to an unfruitful prayer life. We must examine ourselves before we pray and realize that we can hide nothing from God. He has seen and heard everything we say. By not confessing our sins, we recreate the sin of Adam when he and Eve tried to hide when they heard God walking in the garden. This is totally fruitless and leads to unanswered prayers and chastisement. In my own prayer life this is the first thing I speak to the Lord about in my prayer."

Point #3- "Be "in the spirit" when you pray. You must focus your attention toward heaven and not toward the ground, people around you or be un-focused".

Examples

Ephesians 4:23

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind," Ephesians 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

Point #4- "Be <u>specific</u> in your prayer about what is needed and do not waver in your request(s)".

Examples

James 1:6-7 "But he must ask in faith, without doubting, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not expect to receive anything from the Lord"

Many of my brothers and sisters are praying but I would challenge many of the prayers that I have heard if it was done in true faith believing they would receive what they prayed for. Vasilating in our requests or being non-specific are signs of a lack of faith. If we are not specific about our request, how will we even know if we received an answer to our prayer? Answered prayers build faith.

Point #5 - "Be PATIENT. God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will be when best needed and in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!

<u>Examples</u>

Luke 1:7,11,13

"But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well along in years. Just then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John."

Point #5 - Continued "Be PATIENT!". God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will come when best needed in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!

Examples

Genesis 12:2,4

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran."

Abram was 50 years old when he married Sarai. We know that Abram was praying to God for an heir just as Isaac later did in Genesis 25:21 as Sarai was barren (Genesis 11:30).

Point #5 - Continued "Be PATIENT!". God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will be when best needed and in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!

Examples

Genesis 13:15-17

"For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to you"

This is the first reference that God will give Abram an heir. He is already over 75 years old and has been praying for over 25 years for an heir.

Point #5 - Continued "Be PATIENT!". God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will be when best needed and in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!

<u>Examples</u>

Genesis 15:3-6

"Abram continued, "Behold, You have given me no offspring, so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the LORD came to Abram, saying, "This one will not be your heir, but one who comes from your own body will be your heir." And the LORD took him outside and said, "Now look to the heavens and count the stars, if you are able." Then He told him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and it was credited to him as righteousness"

By the this time Abram had left Haran and then Egypt and is over 80 years old and 86 years old by the time Ishmael was born.

Point #5 - Continued "Be PATIENT!". God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will be when best needed and in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!

<u>Examples</u>

Genesis 17:15-17

"And God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shalt her name be. And I will bless her, and give you a son also of her: yes, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?"

Abraham is now 100 years old and has been praying for a son for 50 years. Still his faith had not wavered that the Lord would fulfill his promise.

Point #5 - Continued "Be PATIENT!". God hears your prayer from the very first time you bring your petition up, but the answer will be when best needed and in God's time. This can be a long time so do not give up!

<u>Examples</u>

Genesis 21:2,3

"For Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac."

Abraham was 100 years old by the time Isaac was born and Sarah was 90. Some prayers take a LONG time before God will answer them! Be patient and wait on the Lord. It will be counted to you for righteousness not to waiver. If we start to think that we have been waiting a long time for answer, we need to consider this situation before we get impatient! ;-)

Point #6 "The more people who agree with you in prayer, the stronger your point will be with God"

While it is not mandatory for multiple believers come together in agreement on a prayer need, it strengthens the petition.

<mark>Examples</mark> Mathew 18:20

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the middle of them."

2 Corithians 13:1

"~In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Point #6 - Continued "The more people who agree with you in prayer, the stronger your point will be with God"

<mark>Examples</mark>

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Point #6 - Continued "The more people who agree with you in prayer, the stronger your point will be with God"

Examples – Peters release from Prison

Acts 12:5-9

"Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him. And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell: and he smote Peter on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed; and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision."

Point #6 - Continued "The more people who agree with you in prayer, the stronger your point will be with God"

Acts 12:12-17 – Peters release from Prison Continued

"And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for Joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was even so. And they said, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place."

Point #6 - Continued "The more people who agree with you in prayer, the stronger your point will be with God"

Peters release from Prison: Conclusion

While the brothers and sisters met as a group and prayed for Peters release from prison, did they believe that what they were praying for would come to pass? It didn't seem like it did it as they were surprised that Peter was at the door. God answered their prayer in spite of this unbelief, but God was merciful and answered their prayer anyhow as they were all of one accord in the request. Do you think this built their faith to see this prayer answered in such a miraculous way? Would it have affected your faith if you had been one of the brothers or sisters in that group?

Point #7 "Listen to the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayer. If you do not have specific instructions, pray according to an empathetic response to the situtuation. God is love. The prayer request should be motivated by love. This is God's will for every situation."

Examples

James 5:14-16

"Is any sick among you? 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: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 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."

The Lord's Example Prayer (Mathew 6:5-19)

5, And when you pray, you shall 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. Truly I say to you, They have their reward.

6, But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

This is about personal prayer and not group prayer. There are times we need to come together as a group and pray but we should understand that God does not tolerate people who do something just to be seen doing it. (Annanias and Sophira for example).

The Lord's Example Prayer

7, But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8, Be not you therefore like to them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him. Vain repetitions here are talking about prattling speech. To prattle is to talk at length in a foolish or inconsequential way. They will go on and on saying the same thing in different ways I think just to hear themselves talk. Be specific in your prayer and state your need directly. Be earnest.

The Lord's Example Prayer - Continued

9, After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father which are in heaven, Hallowed be your name.

10, Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11, Give us this day our daily bread.

We covered vs. 9 in Point #1. In verse 10 we are to pray that God's will be done on earth (100% compliance) as it is in heaven. The completion of this will occur when Christ returns during the millennial reign. While all things work together for good for a believer (Romans 8:28), not all things are in God's will. For a believer, God can still make lemonade from lemons. Verse 11 is a request that God supply only our basic needs. Not our wants, but needs. If we pray for "wants" then we are trying to build our treasures on this earth and not in heaven.

The Lord's Example Prayer - Continued

12, And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
13, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For your is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Verse 12 &13 were already covered in point #2

14, For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15, But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses

Verse 14&15 again speak of hypocrisy and the biblical concept of "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". (Mathew 18:21-35)

The Lord's Example Prayer - Continued

16, Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Truly I say to you, They have their reward.

17, But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face;

18, That you appear not to men to fast, but to your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.

We covered vs. 16-18 in the pre-prayer checklist #1 on fasting and yet again this repeats the prohibition of hypocrisy. If we fast, we should tell no one and do not make it look like we are fasting. If we wear sackcloth, we should not go out in it or we should cover it so others do not see it.

The Lord's Example Prayer - Continued

19, Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

And this last verse is meant for the hearer to understand that storing up treasures here on earth is fruitless. The only lasting treasure that we can take with us into the next life is the fruit we bear in our walk with Christ.

CONCLUSION

Our prayer life is the perhaps the most important thing in our daily Christian walk as it actively develops our relationship with God. If we neglect our communication with God, how will our walk with him grow? It is one thing to read the word and to talk about standing on the word of God, it is another thing for the living God to be active in your life. You can never know anyone until you have spent time with them. The same can be true for God. We must spend quality time with him, and an active prayer life is essential for that.

https://middleofthegarden2.i234.me/wordpress/