

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 2, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## PRAYER THAT WORKS Introduction To A Study on Prayer *James 5:16b, Various*

*More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day. For what are men better than sheep or goats that nourish a blind life within the brain, If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer both for themselves and those who call them friends? For so the whole round earth is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God.” – Alfred Lord Tennyson*

### PRAYER QUOTES

- Prayer lays hold of God’s plan and becomes the link between His will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit’s prayer.  
~ *Elisabeth Elliot*
- Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be made into a burden. ~ *Corrie Ten Boom*
- Work as if you were to live a hundred years, pray as if you were to die tomorrow. ~ *Benjamin Franklin*
- Prayer must carry on our work as much as preaching; he preacheth not heartily to his people that will not pray for them. ~ *Richard Baxter, 1615 – 1691*
- Groanings which cannot be uttered are often prayers which cannot be refused. ~ *Spurgeon*
- God warms his hands at man’s heart when he prays. ~ *John Masefield*
- If your day is hemmed in with prayer, it is less likely to come unraveled.  
~ *Unknown*
- When you are in the dark, listen, and God will give you a very precious message...  
~ *Oswald Chambers*
- God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil...  
~ *E.M.Bounds*
- It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone. ~ *Hudson Taylor*
- There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer. ~ *D.A.T. Pierson*

- The great people of the earth today are the people who pray, (not) those who talk about prayer...but I mean those who take time and pray.  
~ *S.D. Gordon*
- All vital praying makes a drain on a man's vitality. True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice. ~ *J.H. Jowett*
- Work, work, from morning until late at night. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall have to spend the first three hours in prayer. ~ *Martin Luther*
- To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees. ~ *Billy Graham*
- Prayer is the exercise of drawing on the grace of God. ~ *Oswald Chambers*
- Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue; God's voice is its most essential part. Listening to God's voice is the secret of the assurance that He will listen to mine. ~ *Andrew Murray*
- Prayer at its highest is a two-way conversation and for me the most important part is listening to God's replies. ~ *Frank C. Laubach*
- God never gives us discernment in order that we may criticize, but that we may intercede. ~ *Oswald Chambers*
- To desire revival...and at the same time to neglect(personal) prayer and devotion is to wish one way and walk another. ~ *A.W. Tozer*
- God does not delay to hear our prayers because He has no mind to give; but that, by enlarging our desires, He may give us the more largely.  
~ *Anselm of Canterbury*
- Prayer is not only asking, but an attitude of mind which produces the atmosphere in which asking is perfectly natural. ~ *Oswald Chambers*
- History is silent about revivals that did not begin with prayer. ~ *Edwin Orr*
- The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is pray. It is not the only thing; but it is the chief thing. The great people of the earth today are the people who pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer; nor those who say they believe in prayer; nor yet those who can explain about prayer; but I mean those people who take time to pray.  
~ *S.D. Gordon*
- The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity...if we want to see might wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. ~ *J. Hudson Taylor*
- Prayer is exhaling the spirit of man and inhaling the spirit of God.  
~ *Edwin Keith*
- To pray well is the better half of study. ~ *Martin Luther*
- Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but earnestness of soul. ~ *Hannah More*
- Study your prayers, a great part of my time is spent getting in tune for prayer.  
*Robert McCheyne*
- An unschooled man who knows how to meditate upon the Lord has learned far more than the man with the highest education who does not know how to meditate. ~ *Charles Stanley*

- Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do. **Author:** Andrew Murray
- He that loveth little prayeth little, he that loveth much prayeth much. **Author:** Augustine
- Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you. **Author:** Augustine
- If you are strangers to prayer you are strangers to power. **Author:** Billy Sunday
- To God your every Want In instant Prayer display, Pray always; Pray, and neve faint; Pray, without ceasing, Pray. **Author:** Charles Wesley
- Dont pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees. **Author:** Corrie Ten Boom
- Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire? **Author:** Corrie Ten Boom
- Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be made into a burden. **Author:** Corrie Ten Boom
- We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done by importunate prayer. It surmounts or removes all obstacles, overcomes every resisting force and gains its ends in the face of invincible hindrances. **Author:** E.M. Bounds
- God shapes the world by prayer. Prayers are deathless. They outlive the lives of those who uttered them. **Author:** E.M. Bounds
- Time spent in prayer is never wasted. **Author:** Francois Fenelon
- God is not a cosmic bellboy for whom we can press a button to get things. **Author:** Harry Emerson Fosdick
- You must go forward on your knees. **Author:** Hudson Taylor
- The best prayers have often more groans than words. **Author:** John Bunyan

### A PLACE TO START

Scripture has much to say about prayer, and this Biblical study on the subject will explore many of these important passage that deal with this great resource, privilege and opportunity afforded believers. Prayer truly is one of the greatest tools in the tool chest of the Christian. Our key text, however, for our study is going to be James 5:16. This will serve as our launching text and it is certainly a place to start in understanding what we are talking about in the word “prayer.” You see prayer is not just a nice, feel good incantation or recitation of words that are ritualistically recited and routinely given. It is much, much more than that.

*“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*  
*–James 5:16b (NKJV)*

*“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*  
*–James 5:16b (KJV)*

### **3 Questions on Prayer from James 5:16:**

- (1) **What is “effectual” prayer?** – The word translated as “effective” or “effectual” in the KJV is the Greek word “energeo” from which we get our English word “energy.” The word “work” is derived from the same Greek root. It has to do with power to get something done. In other words “effectual” prayer is powerful prayer that works, but notice in James 5:16 that is the prayer of “righteous man” that is powerful. Who or what is a “righteous man”? To be

“righteous” means to be rightly related to God. So one who is rightly related to God has a power in prayer that will work. How do we get “rightly related to God”? Only through Christ? (See Romans 5:1ff)

- (2) **What is “fervent” prayer?** – The word translated as “fervent” is the Greek word “zeo” from which we get our English word “zeal” or “zest.” What does it mean when something has zeal or when something is zesty? Full of life, full of vim and vigor. In other words it is not passive, lifeless, empty, meaningless, repetitious, just going-through-the-motions kind of prayer. “Fervent” prayer, then, is prayer that is full of passion, vim and vigor, and zest. This is the only kind of prayer that should come from one who is “rightly related to God” through Jesus Christ. If Christian’s can’t pray passionate prayers something is wrong in their relationship with Christ.
- (3) **What is “availing” prayer?** – The words translated as “avails” or “availeth” in the KJV is the Greek word “ischuo” which literally mean “to be strong in body, to be robust, in sound health, to have power, to prevail, to be of force, to be capable of producing results.” So “availing” prayer is prayer that produces results, that is 100% successful every time, that prevails. This word “ischuo” is also sometimes translated as “able.” “Availing” prayer is prayer that is able to accomplish its purpose.

## PRAYER STATISTICS

*A traveler in China visited a heathen temple on a great feast-day. Many were the worshippers of the hideous idol enclosed in a sacred shrine. The visitor noticed that most of the devotees brought with them small pieces of paper on which prayers had been written or printed. These they would wrap up in little balls of stiff mud and fling them at the idol. He enquired the reason for this strange proceeding, and was told that if the mud stuck fast to the idol, then the prayer would assuredly be answered; but if the mud fell off, the prayer was rejected by the god.*

*We may smile at this peculiar way of testing the acceptability of a prayer, but is it not a fact that the majority of Christian men and women who pray to a Living God know very little about real prevailing prayer? Yet prayer is the key which unlocks the door of God’s treasure-house.*  
-Author Unknown, “The Kneeling Christian”

Of all the Christian disciplines perhaps none is as neglected, abused and taken for granted as prayer. **Why is that do you think?** (Allow time for response)

*Surveys of U.S. adults and teenagers by Barna Research Ltd. from 1991–2001 revealed the following statistics about people’s prayer habits:*

### **Who prays?**

- 82% of adults and 89% of teenagers pray in a normal week.
- 88% of women and 75% of men pray in a typical week.
- People living in the South and Midwest pray more than those living in the West and Northeast (around 86% to 76%, respectively).
- 96% of born-again Christians pray weekly, while 72% of people not describing themselves as born-again pray on a weekly basis.

### **What do people pray about?**

- 95% of adults thank God for what he has done in their lives.

- 76% ask for forgiveness for specific sins.
- 67% spend time in prayer worshipping God by praising his superior attributes.
- 61% ask for help for specific needs.
- 47% are silent during prayer to listen for God.

### **What do people believe?**

- 89% of adults believe "there is a God who watches over you and answers your prayers."
- 82% of people believe that prayer can change what happens in a person's life.

### **When and how much do people pray?**

- An average prayer lasts just under five minutes.
- 52% of people who pray do so several times a day.
- 37% of people say they pray once a day.
- 33% of adults regularly participate in a prayer group or prayer-focused meeting.
- 21% have extended prayer time with other family members (25% among Protestants and 13% among Catholics).

## **PRAYER AND HEALTH**

A May 2004 study of 31,000 adults by the National Center for Health Statistics and NCCAM found that:

- 45% had used prayer for health reasons.
- 43% had prayed for their own health.
- Almost 25% had others pray for them.
- Almost 10% had participated in a prayer group for their health.
- Almost 62% had used prayer when it was included in the definition of CAM (complementary and alternative medicine)

And a study of 10,000 people the by National Center for Health Statistics found that:

- Prayer was the therapy most commonly used among all the CAM therapies included in the survey.
- Other CAM approaches with a spiritual component included meditation, yoga, tai chi, qi gong, and Reiki.

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According to a 1996 Gallup Poll for the Princeton Religion Research Center:

- Fully half of Americans said that they pray or meditate in private on a daily basis.
- An additional 18% reported doing so several times a week.

Of those who engage in this prayer or meditation:

- 64% "sit quietly and just think about God."
- 44% "meditate or try to get in touch with God or a higher power."
- 16% "sit quietly and meditate using a secular meditation practice."
- 9% "use an eastern meditation practice."

## **PRAYER BASICS**

### **What Does the Bible Say About Prayer?**

Have you struggled with prayer? Does prayer seem like an exercise in eloquent speech that you just don't possess? Prayer is not a mysterious practice reserved only for minister and clergy, and the religiously devout.

**A good definition for prayer:** *“Prayer is simply communicating with God.”* —listening and talking to him.

Believers can pray from the heart, freely, spontaneously, and in their own words. If prayer is a difficult area for you, learn these basic principles of prayer and how to apply them in your life.

**What Does the Bible Have to Say About Prayer?** - The Bible has a lot to say about prayer.

### **3 Practical Prayer Tips From the Bible:**

- (1) **The first mention of prayer is found in Genesis 4** - Genesis 4:26 *“And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.”*(NKJV)
- (2) **What is the correct posture for prayer according the Bible?** - There is no correct or certain posture for prayer.

#### **Here are some of the postures mentioned in Scripture:**

1. **On the knees** (*1 Kings 8:54*) - In the Bible people prayed on their knees
2. **Bowing down** (*Exodus 4:31*) - Bowing down before God in prayer
3. **Prostrate on the ground or face** (*2 Chronicles 20:18; Matthew 26:39*) – Seen as praying on their faces before God
4. **Standing** (*1 Kings 8:22*) -  
*\*NOTE: These are just a few, but you may pray with your eyes opened or closed, quietly or out loud—however you are most comfortable and least distracted. The posture is not nearly as important as the heart of the person doing the praying.*

- (3) **Should I use eloquent words when I pray?** - Your prayers need not be wordy or impressive in speech. Remember Jesus said in *Matthew 6:7* says, *“When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again.”* (NLT) *And the wise writer of Ecclesiastes tells us in Ecclesiastes 5:2, “Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few”* (NIV)

### **Why Should I Pray?**

#### **2 Biblical Reasons to Pray:**

- (1) **Prayer Develops Our Relationship with God** - If we never speak to our spouse or never listen to anything our spouse might have to say to us, our marriage relationship will quickly deteriorate. It is the same way with God. Prayer—communicating with God—helps us grow closer and more intimately connected with God. *Zechariah 13:9* *“I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘These are my people,’ and they*

will say, 'The LORD is our God.' " (NLT) John 15:7 "But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted!" (NLT)

- (2) **The Lord Instructed Us to Pray** – In other words, we should pray because God/Jesus told us to. One of the simplest reasons to spend time in prayer is because the Lord instructed us to pray. Obedience is a natural by-product of discipleship. Matthew 26:41 "Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!" (NLT) Luke 18:1 "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (NIV) Ephesians 6:18 "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." (NIV) (See also - Matthew 7:7 and 1 Timothy 2:8)

**What If I Don't Know How to Pray?** The Holy Spirit will help you in prayer when you don't know how to pray. Romans 8:26-27 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (NIV)

## SUCCESS IN PRAYER

Are there some things that make for a successful prayer life? Absolutely, but they probably are not what you think. Success in prayer is not measured by how eloquent your words are, how long your prayers are, or by your much praying. Yes, there are some requirements found in the Bible for successful prayer. In closing let's look at a few of these as we kick off our study on prayer and begin to put these into practice as we daily seek the Lord in prayer.

### 5 Requirement for Successful Prayer:

- (1) **A Humble Heart** - 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (NIV)
- (2) **Wholeheartedness** - Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (NIV)
- (3) **Faith** - Mark 11:24 "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (NIV)
- (4) **Righteousness** - James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (NIV)
- (5) **Obedience** - 1 John 3:22 "And we will receive whatever we request because we obey him and do the things that please him." (NLT)