

Christian Basics

CHAPTER EIGHT

Prayer

HERE IS WHY THIS CHAPTER IS IMPORTANT

- We must understand the concept of the priesthood of the believer
- We must understand how to overcome hindrances to prayer
- We must understand how to develop a healthy prayer life

We know that Jesus spent whole nights alone in prayer. He prayed publicly. He prayed privately. At times, he prayed out loud so those around him could overhear. Jesus taught on the topic of prayer and he devoted several parables to the subject of prayer. He even gave us a model on which to base our prayers. Jesus expected his disciples to pray. Prayer is an absolute indispensable necessity in the lives of all those who follow Jesus.

As you study this section you will find new confidence and a renewed sense of calling to prayer like never before. We will begin by looking at one of Jesus' parables on prayer. We will then focus on three areas: 1) the reason for prayer; 2) overcoming hindrances to prayer; 3) practicing prayer.

Section One

A PARABLE ON PRAYER

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

Parables are a genre of literature that is found in both the Old and the New Testaments. Jesus was the expert in the art of the parable. A parable is a story. It is a teaching tool. A parable has a way of sticking like Velcro to our hearts and minds. The truth of a parable can penetrate quickly to those willing to listen or it can slowly seep into the minds of those who are not so willing. Truth in story-form can be a kind of friendly persuasion.

We are fortunate that Jesus gave us this parable. Jesus so graciously condescended to reach out to us by parables. He did this because he loves us and wants to get his truth into our lives. What a beautiful and loving way to lead us into his truth! Parables were a great learner-friendly means of teaching. We are also told right up front the major purpose of this parable: to show us that we should always pray and not give up. We'll return to this parable later in this chapter.

Jesus knows human nature. It takes faith to pray. He knows that we are subject to discouragement. He knows that we can be flattened by our circumstances and that this can flatten our faith. Our faith will be strengthened as we are informed about prayer and the view Jesus had regarding it. We will now look at the reason behind prayer. I hope these reasons will incite you to a deeper life of prayer.

Section Two **THE REASON FOR PRAYER**

1. Calling

It is our calling to pray. We are people who belong to the Lord. It has always been God's plan to have a people who would represent him on earth.

5 Now if you obey me and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation... Exodus 19:5-6 (NIV)

The Apostle Peter, referring to Christians, showed how this calling was fulfilled in the gospel.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 1:9-10 (NIV)

There are two sides to this "holy priesthood." The first is the fact that we are priests. This is all due to the work of Christ on the cross. We, who have placed our faith in him, now have complete access to God through Christ. Therefore, every born again believer is a priest in the truest sense of the term. The second side to this priesthood is the fact that it is a "holy" priesthood. We belong to God as the "people of God." We are separated unto God. We are called out of the world and set apart (holy) unto God.

Maybe you've heard the expression "the priesthood of the believer." It is the divine calling of every believer. There are no exceptions. It is our calling because it is who we are, and who God made us to be, through the work of Christ. We are called to prayer.

2. Duty

It is our duty to pray. The definition of duty is this: "a task or function arising out of position." It is a moral obligation. Since God has called us out of the world and made us his people, we now have the God-ordained duty to pray.

Since duty can be defined as a task or function arising out of position, let me give you a few illustrations. If you were to witness a crime you would naturally go to a law enforcement officer. You wouldn't go to your neighbor and ask him to pursue the criminal. It is not his duty to do so. Yet, it is perfectly acceptable and natural to go to the one who has been given the duty to go after criminals. If you were in a clothing store and you were looking for that perfect shirt to match the rest of your outfit whom would you ask for help? Of course, you would ask the sales clerk. If you flagged down another customer and told him that you needed help finding a certain item he'd probably give you a funny look. It is not his duty to help you.

During WWII General Eisenhower came to the center of the staging area for the launching of the D-Day invasion. He spoke to the troops and said, "Don't look for anyone else to do your job. It's all up to you." Eisenhower's challenge was a good illustration of a task or function arising out of position. This is the very definition of duty.

We have a task and purpose arising out of our position as people who belong to God. God looks for no one other than us to fulfill the duty of prayer.

3. Privilege

It is our privilege to pray. Only those who belong to God through Jesus Christ have the privileged status of being able to "move the hands of God" through prayer. This is not to say that God does not hear if anyone else should happen to pray, but that we have the God given right to pray. We also hold dear the many promises of God that he will hear our prayers.

The door of privilege has been opened to us. We have been given access into the heavenly realms. It is our loss if we ignore this privilege. It also is the loss of those who might be in need of our intercession. Maybe you've heard of stories of people who have lived lives of poverty. Upon their death their affairs were put in order to the discovery that they had been hoarding a million dollars under a mattress or somewhere in the walls of their dwellings. The world stands amazed that people would have such potential right at their fingertips, yet all the while choose to live the life of the underprivileged. That may be their choice, but we have been given the privilege of prayer and are called to put it into practice.

There may come a day when we might be allowed to see the secret inner workings behind the scenes in the kingdom of God. How many answers to prayer will be seen due to prayers that we ourselves have offered in faith? Prayer is a wonderful privilege given to believers with potential to reach into eternity.

With privilege comes expectation. Believers are a privileged people. We have God for us, along with Jesus. We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The angels of heaven are ministering spirits on our behalf. We have the word of God filled with great and precious promises. We have great churches and teachers everywhere. We have the fellowship of all our fellow believers as well. We also have thousands of years of answers to prayers as our heritage, not to mention the answered prayers that we have already experienced in our lives.

The Apostle Paul gave us a glimpse into the privileges of being a believer. In his letter to the Ephesians he spent the first three chapters outlining our incredible privileges. Among other things, he offered this prayer:

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

*18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.
Ephesians 1:17-18 (NIV)*

The first three chapters of Ephesians is a portion of Scripture that all believers should study. Paul came to the conclusion at the end of chapter three with another prayer and here is how he ended that prayer:

*20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.
Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV)*

This prayer is still alive today. There have been answers to prayers ever since the first human being walked on the earth. It is a gift for all believers down through the centuries. It has lost none of its power. Yes, we are privileged.

4. Need

We need to pray. I can think of at least three very good reasons why we need to pray. First, we are pilgrims on an earthly sojourn. We do not belong to the kingdom of this world, but to the kingdom of God. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are aliens and foreigners on earth. This is something we should never forget. Once we come to God through Jesus Christ we are taken out of the world. As a result, we will always have special need of help. Jesus said,

18 If the world hates you keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. John 15:18-19 (NIV)

Later, Jesus would say,

I have told you these things, so that you would have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33 (NIV)

We need to pray because we cannot count on the help and resources of this world since we do not claim earth as our home. We must depend on heaven's help.

The second reason we need to pray is that we live in a fallen world. Sometimes, even with our greatest efforts and noblest intentions, the ground will still produce for us “thorns and thistles” (Genesis 3:18). It’s part of the curse of the fall. We need help to counteract the effects of this fallen world.

A third reason we need to pray is that we are fallen creatures ourselves. Yes, we have been given a new nature in Christ, but our old, fallen nature is still with us. This is all the more reason to pray.

To help illustrate our need to pray let’s take a look at the way Jesus prayed.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed. Mark 1:35 (NIV)

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16 (NIV)

Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God. Luke 6:12 (NIV)

The implication should be obvious. If Jesus, who was the perfect, sinless, holy, Son of God needed to pray, how about you and me? I think we might agree in the light of this that our neediness far exceeds that of Jesus.

There is something mysterious about prayer. We all seem to know that we need to partake in it, but often find ourselves somehow falling short. I remember watching an interview of Billy Graham on TV and the interviewer asked him if there was anything that he regretted in his long and illustrious career. He answered quickly, “My only regret is that I have not spent more time in prayer.” I thought about all that this man has meant to evangelical Christianity. I reflected on all of his accomplishments and his legacy. Even for a man such as this, he still felt an overwhelming sense of having fallen short in his calling to pray. He was sensitive to the necessity of prayer.

Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). To not pray is to presume that we can operate as aliens in this fallen world without the help of heaven. This is a presumption we cannot live with. Have you ever thought of praying, but found that you just were not in the mood, or couldn’t pray because you were hounded by a nagging sense of failure? Think of it this way: we must pray simply because we need to. The fact that we need to pray is reason enough to pray.

5. Relationship

We were created for relationship with God. Prayer is a great way to celebrate and enjoy this relationship. We can pray while driving our car or while at the kitchen sink washing the dishes. We can pray while walking down the road or while we are at work. Prayer is communication and communion with God. It should be a natural part of our relationship with him.

We can pray using the Psalms or other Scriptures. The following are some examples of parts of Psalms that touch the deepest part of our hearts.

O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. Psalm 3:1-3 (NIV)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? Psalm 42:1-2 (NIV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble. Psalm 142:1-2 (NIV)

These are small examples of the many Psalms that we can use in our own prayers to help capture the passion deep within our hearts. The Psalms also help to give us direction in our prayers. The Bible is a great prayer book. It can be used to sharpen our relationship with the Lord as we use the Scriptures in prayers.

We can also pray as we worship. The many hymns and choruses we sing can be sung with renewed fervency as we realize we are actually singing our prayer. We are communicating and communing with our Lord as we worship. (more about this in the next chapter on worship)

TIME OUT

Take time to review the five reasons for prayer that have been discussed. The headings were: CALLING, DUTY, PRIVILEGE, NEED, and RELATIONSHIP. Go over each one slowly. Reflect on how these reasons have relevance in your life. Let each one energize your own prayer life. Maybe one may stand out more than others.

Write out each of the five reasons for prayer on a piece of paper and see how many Scriptural examples you can give under each heading. Add your own random thoughts and meditations under each heading.

You may want to set aside some time for prayer now. Ask the Lord for help in making prayer a new priority.

Section Three **OVERCOMING HINDRANCES TO PRAYER**

In this section three hindrances to prayer will be discussed. Hopefully, at the conclusion of this section, any hindrances to prayer that may have plagued you will evaporate as your faith becomes sharpened. There are three problems we all face that make prayer difficult. The three problems are: sin, unbelief and ignorance.

1. Sin

It is no accident that guilt and shame cause us to withdraw from fellowship with God. Since prayer is fellowship with God it doesn't take the least tincture of guilt or shame to cause us to withdraw from fellowship. This is especially true as we draw close to God. We will be even more sensitized to our own sin and shortcomings. Notice the first word in the following verse.

IF we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NIV)

“IF” is the operative word in 1 John 1:9. It is the difference between this promised being fulfilled or the promise remaining empty. Confession has been defined as telling God what he already knows about us. We need to unburden ourselves and be open and honest with God. Confession is the doorway to continual fellowship with God. God promises to be faithful. He will always forgive. He will be faithful in his promises. That is his nature. God's love and faithfulness will never end. He will always do what he promises.

*Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.
Psalm 36:5 (NIV)*

God is faithful. He is also just. The just price was paid at the cross. We need not worry about a cheap forgiveness if we are sincerely confessing our sins. The Son of God paid the full price. Think about the guilt and shame that might keep us from praying. How long should we grovel? Would one day on our bellies suffice? How about a month? Why not go all out and crawl on our knees to a shrine as an act of penance? The reasonable and Scriptural solution is confession and then to trust God to honor his word. Anything other than this might lead to the mistaken idea that we can somehow merit forgiveness. Since we can merit nothing, what option is there but to confess? Yes, we may sin. Let's not let sin keep us from approaching God. Learn to obey 1 John 1:9 by living on the correct side of the “if.”

2. Unbelief

Prayer can be difficult. Prayer requires faith. Lack of faith can be a hindrance to prayer. Believers can go months, even years, without much praying simply because they have not had their faith ignited in such a way that would make prayer a priority.

One day Jesus' disciples made this request of him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). The disciples had seen some amazing things while they traveled with Jesus. They saw over 5,000 people fed with a few loaves and fishes. They saw the lame walk and the blind see. People were raised from the dead. I find it interesting that the one thing they would ask to be taught had nothing to do with these spectacular miracles. It had to do with something much less spectacular: prayer. Perhaps it was that they simply wanted a model prayer to repeat like other teachers gave to their followers. Or it could have been that they saw Jesus in prayer. They noticed that it was a priority for him. Jesus prayed like he was really in communication with God. This was something foreign to them. Perhaps in their struggle with prayer it had become a bland, lifeless ritual devoid of meaning. Or perhaps they seldom prayed at all. “Jesus, we've seen you pray. Teach us to pray.”

A man wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper saying,

Praying is procrastinating, delaying the inevitable. No one ever answered any prayer, nor ever will. Praying is no more than talking to oneself. A thinking person plans and works things out. A non-thinking person prays.

The man who wrote this letter obviously had no faith to pray. Since faith is a requirement for prayer it is important to realize that faith doesn't always come easy. Many people struggle with prayer. It is a difficult task. Discouragement can cause a person's prayer life to go stagnant and eventually die out. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote a message about faith.

*Without faith it impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)*

Faith is essential to prayer. Sometimes it is a challenge to pray because it doesn't often come easy. These are the times when our faith may be tested. When we find that we have to work at prayer is when we must put our faith to work. Sometimes prayer is work, but because it may be work does not mean that it isn't faith. The fact that prayer can be work is all the more reason to pray to exercise our faith. Eventually the battle will be won if we refuse to give up. Remember, it takes faith to pray.

3. Ignorance

Ignorance can be a hindrance to prayer simply because we might not know God's will. Knowing God's Word will strengthen our faith. One of the purposes of God's Word is to cause our faith to increase. We will find that God is often more willing to answer our prayers than we are to pray. There are numerous invitations to approach God in prayer written in the Bible.

7 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

14 Therefore, since we have such a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let his hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV)

APPROACH ALERT

Sometimes our emotions or personal circumstances can keep us from approaching the Lord in prayer. We might be overcome by feelings of dread or doubt. It could be our fault or nobody's fault, but the feelings might be there just the same. The issue is that we simply cannot, or will not, approach the Lord in prayer while this inner struggle is going on. Spend time meditating on the great invitation to prayer written in Hebrews 4:14-16.

Notice how strongly we are being encouraged to approach God. Jesus is our very own high priest who is sitting at God's right hand and is, in fact, the Son of God! Because he became a human being, he is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Please notice what are we strongly exhorted to do. We are exhorted to approach with confident boldness. We are not to allow feelings of doubt and inadequacy to keep us away. Even though we might very well be full of doubts, our doubts are not the issue. The issue is to approach the throne of grace.

A throne is a seat of power and authority. Think of all the many unapproachable thrones that exist on this planet? Almost all seats of authority on earth are designed to keep people away, especially those who are weak and who are in need. Try having a personal audience with the CEO of a large corporation. Or try to have a sitting with a sultan or a prince. How about a visit with the president of the United States? You'll never get there because these are unapproachable thrones.

But here we have a throne that is above all other thrones. The throne of God is designed to draw us near, not keep us away. And what will we find when approach God's seat of authority? We will "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Mercy implies receiving a gift when we do not deserve it. Grace is the channel that moves the power of mercy. When do we receive this help? We are promised help "In our time of need." Many people are the most fearful of approaching God in their time of need. Yet this is just the time we are told to approach. If we wait until we have no need then we will have defeated the purpose for coming to God in the first place.

This is an ALERT to encourage all believers to do as God's Word instructs. We all will be forced to choose between obedience to feelings and emotions or obedience to God's Word. Choose God's Word.

Let's take another look at the parable from Luke 18. The judge in the parable neither feared God nor cared about men. On the scale of human kindness he would be on the lowest level. In fact, Jesus labeled him an "unjust judge." The woman in the parable was a widow. Widows were among the weakest and most vulnerable people in that society. So, Jesus cast the parable with two characters that were a study of contrasts. The judge: the strongest and one who wields the most power, and the widow: the weakest and one who had no power.

As we compare the unjust judge to God we will see the point that Jesus was trying make:

- To the judge the widow was a stranger. We are no strangers to God. He knows us better than we know ourselves.
- The judge kept turning the widow away. God never turns us away. He bids us to come and to come with bold confidence.
- The widow must come to an unjust judge. We come to a God who is just. He is, in fact, The Righteous Judge.
- The widow was given no encouragement to approach the judge for help. We are given every encouragement to come. In fact, we are chastised for NOT approaching.

- The widow could only come to see the judge at certain times. God keeps no office hours. He never slumbers or sleeps.
- The widow's urgent need provokes the unjust judge to anger. God welcomes our need. In fact, he will often move heaven and earth just to show us how needy we truly are.
- The widow had no one to serve as her advocate. We have been given an advocate of unimaginable magnitude. "If God be for us, who can be against us... Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us... the Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us" (Romans 8:26, & 31, & 34).

If the widow woman could receive justice at the hand of an unjust judge, how much more will we receive the help we need as we come to the judge of all righteousness who loves us with an undying love? His love for us was proven on the cross. The single point of the parable was that we should "always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). In the light of so much encouragement how could we do otherwise?

Ignorance of the will of God regarding prayer can hinder prayer. When we realize how much God desires for us to exercise our right and privilege of prayer the more we will be likely to take advantage of this God-given, God-ordained spiritual blessing.

Section Four **PRACTICING PRAYER**

One of the secrets to prayer is that we learn by doing. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray he responded by giving them a model prayer. This model prayer has become known as "The Lord's Prayer." While it is rightly known as the Lord's Prayer it can actually be called "The Disciples' Prayer." It was given as a model to follow. We do not have to follow rote prayers, but we can benefit from guidance. There is no better guide in the practice of prayer than Jesus.

The Lord's model prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) is reproduced below. It is broken down into categories to help you to see the outline of this magnificent aid to prayer.

PRAISE AND ADORATION

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,"

A good place to start is by spending time praising and thanking God for his goodness and love. We don't want to barge in to the King's chamber by rudely blurting out demands. We need to exercise proper decorum and respect. Besides this, entering into presence of God this way will

teach us awe and reverence. It will help us remember his greatness. This will benefit us as much as any answered prayer that we might receive.

Example: “Thank you Father for your goodness to me. Your grace is precious. You have been my Shepherd and Savior. I thank and praise you... etc.”

INTERCESSION

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.”

God’s will is done perfectly in heaven, but this world is still a work in progress. We are waiting for final redemption. However, the will of God can be manifest in answer to prayer. His will is being done to a large extent in the lives of those who belong to him. There are many places God’s will is not being done. This is the part of the prayer where we can intercede for God’s will to be done in the lives of the others and in our own lives as well. We can intercede for all the needs around us.

Example: “Dear Lord, let your will be done in Pete’s life. He needs help in finding a job. Lord, I also pray that you would look after my sister who is ill... etc.”

PETITION

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Daily bread can stand to mean any need that we might have. After we have properly entered into communication and have made intercession for others, we can now bring our petitions before the Lord. He has instructed us to do so. He is our source. We are to lay out all of our needs and concerns before him.

Example: “Help me to provide for my family. Please look after my new position at work and give me favor with my new boss... etc.

CONFESSION

“Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors.”

Our willingness to forgive others is linked with our having been forgiven ourselves. The two cannot be separated. So strongly are they linked that it is assumed we have forgiven others before we would presume to ask God for the same. This will cause us to walk circumspectly, not leaving broken relationships behind us. Therefore, the door is open to enjoy unbroken communion with God as we strive to repair any broken relationships we might have with others.

Example: “Dear God, have mercy on me a sinner. Help me to grow stronger in my walk with you. Please forgive me for _____. ...etc.

GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Our prayer ends with the request for God’s leading in our lives. God has promised to order our steps as we depend on him. We need to live a life of humble dependence. We also live in a fallen world that is under the influence of “the evil one.” Prayer is needed to steer us away from Satan’s influences and the influences of this fallen world.

Example: “Let your hand be upon me today as I am at work. Keep my thoughts set on you, O Lord. Guide me in my decisions... etc.

PRAISE AND ADORATION

“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

This last line is not in the earliest manuscripts, but is found in later ones. However, I leave it here because it serves as a good way to close. Just as we don’t want to abruptly enter the King’s chamber without a proper entrance, we should not slam the door on our way out. It is good to end our prayers with praise and thanksgiving.

Example: “Thank you, Lord, for all your love and care. I praise you for your faithfulness... etc.

This is the model prayer that Jesus gave that may serve as a template for an extended time in communion with God. Not all prayer need follow this pattern because not all prayer is as formal as this. Many times our praying may be spontaneous and perhaps not as comprehensive. However, this is the model Jesus gave that can help us to cultivate a life of prayer. The more we use this pattern the more it will become second nature to us.

Time Out

Write out the outline headings and the verses from the Lord’s Prayer. Make your own personal prayer chart using the categories taken from the Lord’s Prayer. Now, find a quiet place where you can be alone and begin praying according to the outline. Pray every day for a month using this outline.

Remember, we learn by doing. The rewards are infinite. God is infinite. Remember the infinite promise given at the end of chapter three of Ephesians?

Now to him who is able to immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. Ephesians 3:20

CONCLUSION

The parable in Luke 18 began with this introduction: “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” After the parable there is this interesting and arresting comment by Jesus: “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” The implication could be that the trials and perils of life as a believer are such that it could render a person faithless. Prayer, among other things relating to our faith, may fall victim to the daily discouragements and trials of life. The question remains, who will fall off and who will continue to pursue a vibrant and rewarding life of prayer with the Lord in the midst of it all?

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

1. If God is all-powerful why does he need people to pray?

Fellowship was broken at the garden. God’s first words to the first sinners were, “Where are you?” He never had to ask this question before. Of course, God knew where they were, but the question served to show us that sin brought immediate separation. Since that time God has condescended to use human beings to bridge that gap that still exists because of the fall. God said to the people, “You will be for me a kingdom of priests...” (Exodus 19:6). Prayer is an outworking of God’s plan of redemption. We all hold the awesome responsibility to live up to our calling as priests.

Adam and Eve had stewardship over creation before the fall. Now those who have been redeemed have a new kind of stewardship after the cross. We exercise our stewardship as we fulfill our rightful place as priests before God. He will use us to bridge the gap that sin has created. God allows us to have share of the responsibility to bring his redemptive power to bear in our world.

More questions?

Go to **christianlifetools.org** with your questions. They will be answered ASAP.

REVIEW

1. Reread the parable that Jesus gave us in Luke 18:1-8. Can you remember the dramatic contrasts between the unjust judge and our loving God?
2. Memorize the five reasons why we should pray. Be able to elaborate on each one as if you were trying to encourage someone else on the subject of prayer.
3. What are the three hindrances to prayer? How can they be overcome?
4. Search the Psalms until you find one that you can use in your praying.
5. Memorize the passage in Hebrews 4:14-16. Let its encouraging teaching inspire you toward confidence as you approach God in prayer.
6. Make a prayer journal using the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as your outline. Set aside time for prayer each day using the journal.
7. We often forget or we overlook answers to prayer. Keep a log of answered prayers in your prayer journal.