

## PRAYING IN FAITH

How is your prayer life? Do you pray every day? Do you enjoy praying? Do you see lots of answers to your prayers? Do you feel like you are really talking to God and He is really bending down an ear and listening to you? Do you pray big prayers or are you afraid to pray big prayers?

Today we are going to talk about praying in faith. The Bible says if you have faith that is so tiny, as tiny as a little mustard seed, then you can move mountains. A mustard seed is almost the tiniest seed there is, and yet that kind of faith can move a mountain. Have you ever seen answers to a prayer you prayed and everyone around you thought, "Wow, amazing, amazing," and they glorified God because they saw God answer your prayer in such a big way that there was no doubt it was God. Everyone knew it.

Prayer is such a simple thing, or is it? The people that walked around with Jesus, their Rabbi and teacher, noticed that he had something in His prayer life that they did not have. In the days that Jesus actually walked, it was not uncommon for a group of men to have one main teacher or rabbi that really instructed them. He disciplined them. He took them past the ordinary into deeper knowledge. That is what Jesus did with these twelve men that He picked. The first thing they noticed was that Jesus prayed a lot. They might say, "Where's Jesus, it's time to eat breakfast, where is He?" Somebody would say, "He's been out praying since real early this morning." After they had been out ministering to people, the disciples would be tired and they would be thinking "Let's get this show on the road, let's get out of here. Let's go eat, let's go do something. Where's Jesus?" He would be off praying again, He had gone up in the mountains to pray. Why did He do that? Because He really understood that God listened, that God cared, and that God wanted to help. Before He did anything big, He prayed about it, everything that He could think about. I pray so much about these shows. I probably have 50 to 70 people praying right now for you and for this show. You have to have a lot of prayer to do anything. For something to really succeed, a lot of prayer has to go in before you ever do it. Do not ever try to do anything without a lot of prayer before hand.

Prayer is the rototiller in your life. It tills up that soil. When these disciples heard Jesus praying, they noticed an intimacy. In the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven," the word there is really like "Papa" or "Daddy", it is an intimate word. They began to see that Jesus did not pray like the other people. He prays like He is really talking to someone. I grew up in a denominational church. I really did not see much of the Holy Spirit in action in the church. They were wonderful people but I did not see anything that happened that made me think it was the Holy Spirit except for one lady. When they called on Miss Fannie to pray, everyone looked forward to it. They knew Miss Fannie was going to talk to God and they were going to get to listen in. I am sure that is how the disciples felt. When Jesus prayed, if they were near, they listened and tried to watch Him and see what was happening because they wanted to do it. They wanted to be able to touch God the way Jesus touched God. Are you like that? You know you can. Are you aware that Jesus is in heaven right now interceding for you and me? Every time we pray, we have someone right there praying with us. We have the Holy Spirit in us. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit and there is more power in the way we pray. There is more power in everything we do.

(Look at these three pictures. What do you see?) You see a man praying, it is very important for men to pray. You can see a woman praying in church; it is important to pray everywhere you go. You can see a girl praying. Every one of them has some kind of relationship with God. They know they have a loving God that cares, wants to listen, and in fact, says, "Pray, pray without ceasing. Pray all of the time."

How do you know that God is really listening to you? You can say, "Well, Betty, I can feel it in my heart. I see the answers to my prayers." You can say things like that and that is great, but you always want to be able to back things up Scripturally. What is a good Scripture that says God is really listening? In Psalm 34:15, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." I want to tell you about something I saw happen in Malawi, Africa last April. We went into a very tiny village; it was right down by the equator. It was very, very hot. In a tiny school room were a group of women. They were sweet and excited that we had come down there to see them. It was a four or five hour trip. I said, "Ladies, today we are going to look at Psalm 34:15. Open your Bibles and look at this verse." Nobody did anything; just a few opened their Bibles. I said again, "Ladies get out your Bibles and turn to Psalm 34:15." Finally, one of the ladies in the group said, "They don't have any Bibles." "You don't have Bibles? Well, we brought Bibles," I said. We ran to get the Bibles and brought them in. The women started

dancing, singing and waiving their hands and their Bible in the air. They were overjoyed that they had a Bible. Then I said, "Now, turn to Psalm 34:15." They did not do it. Again I said, "Can you turn to Psalm 34:15 and we are going to read that." The lady that was accompanying us said, "They don't know how to read." The Holy Spirit told me something so neat to tell those women to do. I said, "Ladies, get a friend that can read. There is nothing to be ashamed of if you can't read. Get a friend and open your Bible. I want you to put your finger on that verse. I know you can't read it but I am going to tell you what that verse says." "The eyes of the Lord are open to the righteous and His ears are open to their cry." "Now ladies, I want you to underline that. I know you can't read it. I want to tell you, every time you get in trouble, every time you go through great heartache, every time your heart is breaking, every time you have a tremendous need, you open your Bible until you find the underlined sentences. Even though you can't read, you put your finger right there because you know that that is saying that God's ears are open to your cry." God's ears are always open to your cry, folks. There is never a time that you can go to God and He will say, "Oh, here she is again or here he is again." It is never that way. Why? Because you have a loving Daddy, you have a loving Father, who thinks the world of you. He loves you. He wants to be with you. He wants to help you. He wants to answer your prayers. Never think that God is too busy for you, or that he deals with important people but he does not deal with you. That is not true. You are as important to God as anybody else on the face of the earth. In fact, if nobody else lived on the face of the earth but you, God would care about you and want to talk to you.

The second Scripture we are going to look at is in Proverbs 15:29. "The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayers of the righteous." Every time you pray, He is going to hear it. It is a great feeling, isn't it? How often do you pray? Once a day? Do you have to pray for an hour? No, you pray all day long. The Bible talks about that. It says pray without ceasing. What does that mean? You cannot just go around doing nothing but praying. What it means is, every time you think about something you are concerned about or that you need help with, you just talk to the Lord. The other day I was by my front door and I was just talking to the Lord, and I said, "Lord, where did I put that. I can't remember where I put that and I need it." I started laughing to myself. I thought, "If anybody could hear me, they would think I was crazy or something." Then I thought, "I am not crazy. I am actually talking to someone." There was someone actually listening that wants to guide me and tell me where to find something that I have lost.

God hears the prayers of the righteous. Who is righteous? The Bible says none of us are righteous, and then the Bible says Jesus has made us righteous. The price that Jesus paid for you was to forgive you of your sins, to cleanse you of your sins. But, it says, "To cleanse you of all unrighteousness." You are righteous in God because of Jesus, so God is going to listen to you.

Now we are going to talk about something a little more specific. We are going to be talking about the prayer of faith, praying in faith. Is it different? It is. A lot of people pray, but they do not really believe God will answer. They might hope He might. They think maybe if they said it enough, He might. They think, "If I say it just like I have heard people say it, maybe He will hear me." No, God wants you to talk to Him just like you talk to your best friend. If you have a best friend and you have had that friend for a long time, you have a lot of trust in that friend. You have a lot of faith in that friend. You believe that that friend will do what they say they will do, because you know them. That is the way it is with God. Faith believes God will answer. He does not always answer on your time schedule. He does not always answer on my time schedule. He answers when it is the right time. There is a verse in Psalm that says, "Yea the set time has come. The time to bless Israel has come." I marked that out a little bit and I just put Betty in there. "Yea the set time has come. The time to bless Betty has come." I believe God will answer and I believe God has His own timing. I believe it is better than anything I could do because it factors in things that I do not even know to factor in. You just wait. If you do not get your answer fast, you wait. Many, many times, God answers really fast, maybe most times.

In the Bible study, "Experiencing God," the author's premise is to pray, watch what happens next and you will experience God. I believe that, I have seen it. Praying without ceasing, all day long, about little stuff, about big stuff. Do you need a prayer list? Some people do. I even have a little thing I wear around my neck that you are supposed to put prayers in. Sometimes if it is a really important thing, I just put it in that necklace. I have something in there right now so that when I wear that necklace I will remember, "Pray about that Betty, that is real important." I heard a man say one time, "I pray all day long, even in my pickup." I said, "You do?" He said, "Yeah, even at lunch. I just sit there and talk to the Lord. I have the greatest relationship with God, it is just wonderful." The biggest thing about praying in faith is it is done accepting that the answer, when it comes, is the will of God. That is real faith because God does not always answer it the way we want. There is a country song, I Thank God for Unanswered Prayer. It is a

song about a man that thought I just have to have this woman, this is the one I need. He prayed and prayed, and God did not answer that prayer. Then he met a wonderful woman, and he wrote the song, I Thank God for Unanswered Prayer. You have to pray in faith, accepting that whatever happens is the will of God, and dealing with it. You just say, "Lord if this is it, praise the name of God."

There is another thing about praying in faith. Do you expect God to do more than you ask for? He does, it says so in Ephesians. He is able to do more than you would ever ask for, think of, hope for or dream of. God is so big and He is so full of love and compassion for people that when He answers He is very generous. He answers more than you ask for. There are times when you need to make a decision or you need something to happen. An example would be maybe in choosing a mate, for those of you that are single. It is not a lack of faith to tell God what you want, it is actually true faith. "Lord this is what I want in a mate," and name the things that you think are important to you, that you wish this person had, and that these qualities were in this person. Then be aware that God is going to give you more than you ask for.

What else is good about praying in faith? It is very exciting. I have to watch myself. I find myself saying, "I can't believe He did that." Then I think, "What do you mean you can't believe it? You prayed it, you asked for it." It is an expression we really have to watch out for. God did do it because we did believe. It is comforting. Everybody has problems, you have problems, and I have problems. We all take them to God. We believe that if we say, "Lord, these are my five problems today and I need you to really help me." It is a very comforting thing. There have been studies done on people who pray and people who do not. The stress level is so much lower for people who pray, than for people who do not pray. I have had people say to me, "You don't think you are just talking up there in the air? Who's up there, how do you know somebody is listening?" You have to put two and two together. You pray and you see an answer. Then you think, "There really is a God. Thank you Jesus, I love you." It is comforting, it is stress relieving, and it is never boring.

I have read all kinds of books on prayer. The kind of prayers you pray and how you pray is really based on your personality type. Mine are very real and they are not very flowery. I listen to some people pray and they can pray flowery prayers, and I think, "I wish that stuff came out of my mouth," but it does not. Mine are just, "Lord, I need you to help me do this," or "God just bless this," or "Help." I am like that, but others are not like that. There are people, who by the nature of their personality and their makeup, like to be very disciplined, very organized. They keep a notebook and have prayer verses that go with everything. I think that is great if you are made like that. If you are not made like that and you try to do it, you get into vain repetitions. Jesus said, "Avoid vain repetitions." It does not please God for you to say the same thing over and over, anymore than it would please your best friend if you said the same thing to them over and over, before you began a conversation with them, or how you conducted the conversation with them. Pretty soon, they would be looking at you thinking, "What is the matter with you? It's me, just talk to me." That is the way God is. He is that close. He wants to be that close. Do not get into those rote prayers. Try to keep your prayer fresh, try to keep it honest, and try to keep it streamlined. Make sure it has faith accompanying it.

How often do you pray? Is there a Scripture that talks about this? I always like to point you back to the Word of God. Yes, look at this Scripture. This is the third Scripture about prayer. Psalm 55:17-18, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me." Daniel is probably one of my greatest heroes in the Bible because he did not let anything stop his prayer life. He did not let the threat of death or the threat of losing his position in the kingdom, in effect losing his job. He prayed when he knew God was telling him to do it and God honored that.

Why do you even need to talk to God about your needs if it says in Matthew 6:8, "Your Father knows the things you have need of before you even ask Him," so why should we ask. The point of prayer is not necessarily just to get answers from God, even though that is what we all think of first. Do you know the real point of prayer? It is to have complete oneness with Him. That is what Jesus had with God and that is what those disciples saw. He had a oneness, He had an intimacy, and it was complete. Yes, He did get his prayers answered.

Real praying in faith does not have anger and spiritual irritation in it. What do I mean by that? If you pray only because you want answers, but when you do not get them you get mad, you might say, "That's it. I am not praying anymore. God doesn't answer me. He answers everybody else. That's that, I am out of here." That is not what it is all about. What it is all about is pressing in, saying to God, "I just want to know you." Is God, by Himself, enough for you? Is that enough, is He enough? It is not whether He

answers every one of your prayers just the way you want him to. "It's You Jesus, I just want to be with You." "It's You God, I just want to be with You like Jesus was with You. I want to know that, I want to experience it." When prayer seems to be unanswered, be careful to not place the blame on someone else. Do not do that. There is always a reason. When you have prayed in faith and have not seen the answer, what is one of the reasons God delays you in answering it? He uses these times to draw you into a deeper relationship with him. That is why I am saying do not get angry about it, do not get irritated, press in harder. Just say, "Lord, I must be doing something wrong. Tell me what it is You want from me." He will tell you, He will pull you in. We are here to learn how to pray. Your prayer life gets better and better the longer you go with Jesus and the more intimate you become with Him. However, you have to always remember, faith is one of the key elements in prayer. You have to be able to pray.

(Look at this bullet I put up – no faith, little faith, full of faith.) What is an example of no faith? That would be Mark 4:40, the disciples in the boat drowning and panicking. "Jesus, help us, we are going to drown." What did He say? "Why are you afraid. Do you still have no faith? Do you still not believe in Me?" How about little faith. In Matthew 16:8, they were hungry and trying to figure out how they were going to get some food. Jesus said, "You have such little faith," meaning they had faith but they had little faith. "Why are you arguing with each other about not having any bread?" What does it mean to be full of faith? In Acts 3:6, when Peter said, "I do not have any silver or gold for you, but what I have I give you in the name of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk." Think about Stephen. He was not a pastor of a church, he was a layman. It says, "Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people." What category of praying in faith are you in? You can grow in it. If you have no faith say, "God I don't have any faith in prayer, help me to have faith in it." If you have little faith, say, "Lord I have a little faith. I believe, help my unbelief, but I want to go on past this, I don't want to stay here. Lord, help me to pray where I am full of faith and I believe." What would be some signs of full of faith? Believing God is going to answer before He ever does it would be one sign.

You can pray so much about something and even when nothing has changed in the natural, you know inside yourself that God has already taken care of it. I may have to wait for it to show up, but I know that I know that I know. God has told me in my prayer life that it is a done deal. He is going to answer it. As you grow and as you pray, you will discover two things that will help you a lot. One is reading and meditating on God's word. That does increase your faith, it does stimulate you to pray. The second one is praying in the Holy Ghost, praying in tongues, praying in the spirit. That really increases your faith because you are praying the Holy Spirit's actual language and the devil cannot even understand it. It is very powerful. Remember, when you have been praying in faith, praise God ahead of time for his answers. "Lord, I know You are going to do this. I thank You for it. I praise You for it. I bless You for it. I just honor You God, thank You."

Can you have a faith collapse in your prayers? I have had them. What do you do? Get back up, dust yourself off, and start all over again and say, "Lord this time I am going to do it." Just learn to pray with the simplicity of a child. You can do it. God wants you to do it. Pray.

## 8BD\_109 PRAYING IN FAITH

1. What is the purpose of prayer?
2. Psalms 34:15 and Proverbs 15:29 say that God hears the prayers of the righteous. How do you become righteous before God?
3. Ephesians 3:20 tells us that, "God will do immeasurably than ALL we ask or imagine." Do you expect God to do more than you ask for?
4. How can you get to the next level in your prayer life? (Consider Jesus' prayers)
5. What are the signs of praying in the fullness of faith?

To watch the video on PRAYING IN FAITH, Pillar Three, Prayer go to: [www.bettyswann.com](http://www.bettyswann.com)

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