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## How to Pray! Part V

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### The Pursuit of Prayer

#### Psalm 84; Philippians 4:6-7

#### Do you feel connected to God when you pray?

If not, have you considered your outlook on prayer? It seems that most Christians view prayer as a happening but not a habit, an occurrence but not an occupation, and rarely with fervency. And, if it is a habit, is it also a relationship? Prayer must be more because God wants to be more in our lives! Prayer must be moved from the occasional occurrence to the rendezvous of our relationship. For that reason, I challenge you to examine your spiritual direction; if it is not good or as it should be, take a careful look at how you view and practice prayer! Ask yourself *how can I make it more?* and, *What is in the way of this happening?* Consider that no one has a sufficient prayer life. Even Billy Graham says his prayer life is not what he would like it to be—and he spends one to three hours in prayer a day! Thus, to know if we have a vital prayer life, we need to realize that one of the main indicators is a desire for more! Do you want more?

To pursue a more vibrant prayer life, we have to be willing and able to saturate ourselves with it and in it! Also, we need a desire to move our prayer life from the occasional extracurricular activity to a passionate pursuit, and carry out prayer sincerely, earnestly, and vibrantly with His Spirit and Truth! This means prayer must become more than a just thing we do; rather, it becomes an attitude and a constant pursuit. We grow beyond our regular prayer times; we still have them, but we no longer limit ourselves to pray just at those times. We realize that because Christ is constantly with us, we can constantly commune and converse with Him wherever we are and whatever we are doing.

Prayer is our primary means of communication with our Lord. It is also the bond that builds community, churches, and marriages, as it energizes and brings out God's love! It is a marvel and a wonder that we, as created human beings, can obtain direct communication with God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe! Prayer shows us His love and concern for us just by His allowing us to make our presence and requests known, and His even further, unfathomable love in that He earnestly hears us and gives us an answer and intervention! Prayer is precious; it is not to be a half-hearted endeavor or just an empty routine, an unctuous ceremony, or a meaningless ritual. Prayer is not about the recitation of words nor is it about posture, place, or expression usage; it is an outpouring of the posture of our heart to His. Prayer is an expression of our connection of love for what Christ has done for us in giving each of us this precious relationship with God. It shows our love and dependence on Him. It is a primary avenue for learning about and growing in Him, and being better equipped in life to touch others in His Name. Therefore, it is a relationship of dependency, as any real growth must involve the surrender of our will to His. Prayer pulls us up by the roots and plants us further in His presence and His will. Beware! We are deceiving ourselves if we think we

can live our Christian lives without prayer, as one could be married or have a child and never have communication with that spouse or child. It could be done, but the relationship would be absent and soon would be null and void; we cannot *do* life on our own. Even if we could (and many Christians seem to try it), God just might let us; this would really be a time for fear and dropping to our knees!

The pursuit of continual prayer does not happen overnight. It may take years to develop the discipline for prayer to become second nature, automatic, and continual. Normally for most Christians, prayer is intermittent when we have the time, when we schedule it, and so forth. We still should do our scheduled prayer times; however, the point is that we do it *not only* at our scheduled prayer times! We do this not to just maintain our relationship with Christ, but to empower it further, to build it, and pursue Him totally in our lives. This is not just a job—it is our *main* job. It is not just a function—but our *main* function. It is not just a preparation—but our *main* preparation. It is not just a calling—but the *main* calling of our Christian lives. It is not a duty—but our *main* duty. It is the groundwork and structure of His foundation upon which we build all we do. To be vital and useful Christians, we must be praying Christians—not just for a few minutes a day or when it is convenient, but always and continually in a reverent attitude of prayer! Prayer is meant to line us up in Christ and to conform us to Him, so it builds us up in Him.

There are all kinds of reasons and excuses we can give for not doing this, such as *time* or *I do not know how*, but the bottom line is that this is our direct call from our Lord. It is His high calling upon our hearts and we must respond to Him. Our churches in the West are failing, as a whole, because prayer has been left out. We think we have moved beyond the checklist mentality to see if we have done our devotions, spent time in prayer, or witnessed to someone today. We think we have become more mature. But, if we really take a close look, we will see that we are not spending a significant amount of time in prayer, and our devotions are lacking! Consequently, our churches and personal lives become lacking of His presence and power. When we leave God out and chase our own ideas and trends thinking we are honoring Him, we are actually forsaking Him and leaving behind a wrecked church instead of a triumphant church! What the church needs and what God wants is that we not just talk about or plan for prayer, but that we actually do it—and do it persistently! We are to be committed to prayer by actually scheduling and practicing it as much as is conceivable. Then we will see God's mighty work in our lives, both personally and collectively as a church (Luke 11:1; John 4:23-24; 7:37-38; Acts 2:33).

## Questions to Ponder

### Read Psalm 84

1. How is your prayer life now?
2. Do you feel connected to God when you pray?

3. How does Psalm 84 a model for your prayer life? How can it be more so?
4. If you do not feel close to God, have you considered your outlook on prayer?
5. How would a better outlook on prayer help your prayer life?
6. How has prayer been just an occasional occurrence in your life?
7. What would it take to move prayer to the rendezvous of a real effectual growing relationship with God?
8. What can you do to examine your spiritual direction?
9. What can you do to seek God and ask, how can I make prayer more?
10. What is in the way of real effectual prayer from happening?
11. To pursue a more vibrant prayer life I need to do what?
12. How is prayer an expression of our connection of love for what Christ?
13. How does it help you to know what Christ has done for you in you motivate your precious relationship with God?
14. How has Christ shown you His Love? How have you shown your love and dependence on Him?
15. How can you move prayer so it is not just at your scheduled prayer times?
16. What is the groundwork and structure you need to build to increase your prayer life?
17. Do you think that many of our churches in the West are failing, as a whole, because prayer has been left out? If so, what can be done?
18. What does it mean to you to pray persistently?
19. What is the difference between prayer as an occurrence and as an occupation?
20. How can you prayer life grow from just being an occurrence to an occupation?