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## Prayer is a Relationship

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### **Matthew 6: 5-15; James 4:7-10; 2 Peter 3: 14-18**

God is involved, that He does indeed care, and that He is concerned and does intervene in history, thus we can trust Him. If people come against your belief in Christ and good character, take comfort. No matter what others say or do, God will intervene in His time, and make them the ultimate fools. We need to be reminded of the veracity and importance of prayer, as that gentle refreshing to stimulate us into correct thinking so we can have the faith and strength to stay on His path. We are to know the Scriptures and be disciplined in the faith because this is what keeps our minds on Him, and when we practice these precepts, they become rooted and make us firmer in our faith.

What we go through, even suffering, has meaning and purpose to it. We can remain spotless, as Jesus showed us by His words and His example. When something happens which you do not understand, seek answers in prayer, asking God what you are to learn. This is how we can better grow in the grace and love of our Lord. Then, your faith-development and steadfastness will be far more impacting and real for you and those around you.

Perhaps, one way to see our prayer life is as a *relationship*. A relationship is a living, growing entity that needs the fuel of attention and heart. We need to allow prayer to build slowly—like a relationship. Growing our prayer life is like growing a relationship. We start off as acquaintances; then, as we get to know each other, we become more confident and thus spend more time together. The time spent helps us get to know each other, and that helps build our trust, intimacy, submission, and so forth.

To make it work, as with any friend, we must desire to know and pursue him or her. In prayer, it comes down to *Lord, I want to know You!* Then, we must engage in the pursuit of knowing Him, regardless of how we feel or think. Therefore, we need discipline to make the time for growth, both in prayer time and impact. If it is important for you to do this with friends, work, or school, then your relationship with God should be even more important! God wants us to be intimate with Him, as in personal, active, and intimate! It is not about duty or obligation; rather, it comes out of the gratitude for what He has done for us. We have a love relationship that takes our hearts to be involved. Christianity is never to be passive; it is always to be active! Our participation must include our minds, hearts, and hands (Psalm 5:1-3; Ps 55:17; 88:13; 143:8; Isa 32:2; Prov. 23:7; Dan. 6:10; Matt. 6:6-7; Heb. 4:16)!

The building up of our spiritual intimacy does not develop automatically. We have to hunger and thirst for it. Our faith formation, through prayer, goes beyond knowledge and understanding, beyond practices or formulas; it is where faith is core and the Spirit is the lead. Thus, when we become a Christian, we start to pray; and that prayer life builds as we learn more about our Lord—both His precepts and Him personally. We desire to accept what He has given, and to seek more of Him in our lives. As our minds

gather the knowledge of whom and what our God is, our heart needs to respond to it! However, it is not just the knowledge; it is what we do with it. We cannot advance our time and intimacy with God unless we make the effort to do so. Most importantly, we must allow the work of the Spirit to flow through us in all endeavors. (Psalm 32:5-6; 69:13; 84:2; 95:7-8; Heb. 10:7; 11:6).

When we are new in Christ, He knows us deeply beyond what we can fathom. However, we do not know Him beyond what the Spirit has laid in us, and that is limited to what we have received, learned, and taken to heart. We can be with a friend, not really knowing him or her, just as we can be a Christian and not really know God. Our closeness with Christ as Lord is at its beginning; this can apply to a brand new Christian or one who has gone to church for decades but has done nothing with his or her faith, who received His love and redemption but that was all.

We need to know a person so we can know more about that person and grow closer to that person. It is the same with our connection to God. As we begin our wondrous journey of our spiritual formation and prayer (1 Chron. 16:11; 22:19; Psalm 105:4; Isa. 26:8-9; Hos. 10:12; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:4-6, 8, 14; Zeph. 2:3; Matt. 6:33; James 4:8; Rev. 22:17), we start to take what He has given and pursue Him further. Spend time with Him, be available to Him, become acquainted slowly, and build your friendship consistently. Open your heart to His touch of love! Don't hurry; just enjoy Him so He becomes more than just an acquaintance. Seek Him deeply! Seeking God is not about salvation, for we cannot do that; rather it is our pursuit of growing in Him *after* we have been saved (Matt. 12:33; 18:3; Mark 10:15; John 3:3, 5; 14:9; Rom. 3:11; Titus 3:1-8).

As you grow in Him, you build your relationship with Him so the time you spend, the impact you receive, and your impact upon others grows, too. We become His friends more and more (John 14-15). Again, as with any relationship, we need to put in the desire, effort, and time to seek intimacy and seal that bond. He already has us, and, in His view, we are bound to Him for eternity. The growth and bonding needs work from our side! We must build a real, impacting friendship so we can spend more time together, know and grow more, and desire Him to use us more. This is beyond emotions; it is our growing response to His favor and grace so we are partaking in Him (Rom. 8:16-17; Titus 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; 2:2; 1 John 5:1). This trust leads to more obedience. We rally from our disappointments and learn to grow in experiences as well as failures and sufferings to the point that we jump at any chance to know and grow in Him, regardless of what is around us (Psalm 125:11; Peter 4-5).

We pursue God because He first loved and pursued us. He is active in the world and desires to be active in us. It is up to us to take what He has given and build on it. Then, we can have the assurance of who He is, and we can build up our faith and prayer lives, which leads to stronger character, maturity, and spiritual formation. We become what He has called and formed us to be (John 10:3-5; 1 John 4:19). We have His love and His voice; it is up to us to hear and respond!

## **Questions to Ponder**

**Read Matthew 6: 5-15**

1. How is your prayer life relationship?
2. How do you feel that God is involved, that He does indeed care, and that He is concerned and does intervene in history for you? How can this help you to trust Him?
3. How can you take comfort that no matter what others say or do, God will intervene in His time?
4. Why do you need to be reminded of the veracity and importance of prayer?
5. How does prayer help you to keep your minds on Him?
6. How does prayer help you to practice His precepts?
7. How does prayer help you to allow Christ to become more rooted and make you firmer in your faith?
8. How does prayer help your faith-development and steadfastness to become far more impacting and real for you and those around you?
9. How can your prayer life be strengthened knowing that what we go through, even suffering has meaning and purpose to it?
10. How can you better grow in the grace and love of our Lord through prayer?
11. How can an increase in your prayer time help your faith-development and steadfastness will be far more impacting and real for you and those around you?
12. How is growing your prayer life is like growing a relationship? So what can you do to improve your prayer life and your relationship with Christ as LORD?
13. God wants us to be intimate with Him, as in personal, active, and intimate! What can you do to make this more so in your daily life?
14. The building up of our spiritual intimacy does not develop automatically. We have to hunger and thirst for it. So what can you do to be hungrier for prayer?
15. Read John chaps 14-15. Write a few sentences on what does it mean to you that you have become His friend.