

FIVE LEVELS OF PRAYER

Level 2 -- Sweet Hour of Prayer

"Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne,
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
Thy wings shall my petitions bear,
To Him whose truth and faithfulness,
Engage the waiting souls to bless.

And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for Him, sweet hour of prayer."



The above song was written many years ago by W. B. Bradbury and W. W. Wadsford, and has been sung by millions of Christians around the world. It is still a popular song in the Christian Church today, but how meaningful is it to the present day Christian? How many Christians pray at least one hour every day?

Another popular Gospel song says, "Just a Little Talk with Jesus," and perhaps that song better describes the prayer life of most Christians. However, the very minimum every Christian should pray in order to live a victorious life is at least an hour each day. That won't make you an intercessor or a prayer warrior, but it will probably be enough to maintain your present relationship with Jesus. Therefore we can refer to the one hour prayer as maintenance prayer or survival prayer.

Erkenesh Teklemarian, the precious wife of the superintendent in Ethiopia (where they are having a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit), declared to a Conference held in Louisiana, "You must pray one hour just to overcome temptation, but do you believe that revival will come because of this kind of praying? I think not!" She based this statement on the following verses of Scripture:

"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-41). (See also Mark 14:37-38.)

If you are not regularly praying one hour, make this your first goal, but not your stopping place. At least an hour of prayer every day is required in order to maintain our present relationship with Jesus Christ--to overcome temptation, to help us to live in a way that is acceptable to Jesus.

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Often there is a sad neglect of teaching on how to pray effectively. New converts are told that they should pray, but it is often assumed that they should already know

how to pray. We quickly seek to establish our new converts in our Biblical doctrine. We want them to quickly learn the holiness standards of the church, the importance of tithing, and a dozen other subjects that we deem to be very important. But that which will affect their relationship with God the most is sometimes omitted. They have become soldiers in the army of the Lord, but we send them out to fight without any equipment!

It was the prayer life of Jesus that created a hunger in the heart of the disciples to know how to pray effectively--thus their request, *"Lord, teach us to pray."* Jesus answered them by giving them this prayer pattern:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this daily our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9-13).

Jesus said, *"After this manner pray ye."* The pattern He gave was not something that must be repeated day after day in its exact form. Also, it does not include everything that we are to pray concerning. But it does give us the basic pattern for effective praying. Remember that Jesus' prayer example begins with praise and ends with praise:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Our prayer time should always begin and end with praise and thanksgiving. In fact, if you are going to pray one hour, thirty minutes can easily be spent in praise and thanksgiving to God.

Except for Jesus Christ, the psalmist David gave us the best example of how to spend time in the presence of the Lord--how to pray effectively. He knew how to get his prayers answered. He also knew how to enter into the presence of God:

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name.

For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalms 100:4-5).

THE TIME OF THANKSGIVING

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

". . . in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving . . ." (Psalm 95:2).

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18).

As you can see by these verses of Scripture, thanksgiving is a very important part of our prayer time! For what should we give thanks? For everything! For example:

1. Spiritual Blessings:

Thank Him because He has opened your eyes to the truth and given you a receptive heart.

Thank Him because He took your place and died on the cross for your sins.

Thank Him for the Bible, the Word of God that is such a blessing to your spiritual life.

Thank Him for your church, your leaders, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thank Him because He has forgiven you.

Thank Him for His longsuffering and patience towards you.

Thank Him for His presence (the Holy Ghost) that abides in your life.

Thank Him for the privilege to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. Physical Blessings:

Thank Him for the health and strength He has given to you.

Thank Him for healing your body, and also keeping you from sicknesses and diseases.

Thank Him for protecting you from dangers (accidents, etc.).

3. Material Blessings:

Thank Him for this beautiful world He has placed you in, and all things which beautify it.

Thank Him for the heavens which declare the glory of God.

Thank Him for the air that you breathe.

Thank Him for food, drinks and water He has provided.

Thank Him for your clothes that you wear.

Thank Him for your home, and all of the comforts and conveniences in it.

Thank Him for transportation.

Thank Him for games and recreation.

Thank Him for the office equipment which help you with your work.

Thank Him for music, books, and other worthwhile pleasures.

4. Additional Blessings:

Thank Him for the talents and abilities He has given to you.

Thank Him for the trials and tribulations which allow you to know that you have weaknesses so that you can allow the Lord to help you with them.

This list is certainly not complete, but it should be enough to give you the general

idea, and also show you that it takes a considerable amount of time to obey the Scriptures: "giving thanks always for all things" and "in everything give thanks.

As you can see, thanksgiving is praising God for what He has done for you, and what He has given to you. There is a higher form of praise, and that is the reason David said, "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise*" (Psalm 100:4). In our next lesson we will study about "High Praises." ds

<http://www.sayadi-al-nas.com>