

The Habit of Prayer

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." John 15:7-8

Prayer is expected

"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." Matthew 6:5

"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:6

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." Luke 18:1

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." Colossians 4:2

"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Prayer is learned

1. By practicing it

Learn to pray intensely (focused) and casually (while you do something else).

2. By studying about it

Learn why, how, and for what to pray.

3. By example

Watch and listen as others pray.

Four Basic Prayer Habits

1. Developing the Habit of Devotional Prayer

"In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there." Mark 1:35

Develop a pattern of daily Bible reading/meditation and prayer with the purpose of growing in your knowledge of God. As much as possible have a routine time and place. Use a reading and a prayer plan well suited to your interests and personal needs. If you encounter an interruption to the routine, resume it as soon as possible. If you find boredom setting in, feel free to be flexible and creative in order to keep your time fresh and stimulating. Fundamental to your devotional time is your fellowship with God, not the particular method or routine you follow.

There are two elements of prayer you will want to learn and practice during your devotional time. As you become accustomed to these elements you will begin to blend them. They will become nearly indistinguishable. In time, one will spark the other and you will discover new and enduring energy in prayer.

a. Prayer Lists

A prayer list is a simple way of recording and sorting what you pray and how God answers. There are numerous ways of organizing your lists, so be creative and practical. Suit them to your personal needs. Try different ways of organizing your lists until you find a method that works well for you. Then, stick with that method. Otherwise, your prayer lists become scattered, useless, and frustrating. Make separate lists of the basic areas of concern which you need to pray about using a notebook dedicated for this purpose, or creating documents in your computer. For example, one list may include 'Personal Needs' while another records 'Family Members' needs. Create additional lists for 'Lost and Back sliders', 'Members of my Bible Study' and so forth. Other pages may be titled 'Missionaries' and 'Government Officials'. The point is to sort your prayer requests specifically enough to be manageable, but not so extensively that you can't pray through them all.

Do not feel that you need to have lists for every conceivable subject. Begin with the basics, meaning those areas most important to you. Let God guide you to create new lists.

As your lists get longer consider sorting your lists by the day of the week. For example, you may pray for your family and personal requests each day. Other lists may be prayed through less frequently.

During your devotional time take a few moments to review one or two of the lists. Then, as you read and meditate on the Scriptures pray thoughts which apply to requests on your list. The next day you would simply pray through another list. By doing this over a period of time you are able to pray for all the areas which concern you.

b. Praying Scripture

This simple yet powerful method of praying allows the words and phrases of the Bible to guide your praying. You begin by asking God to assist you by stirring your heart to pray and by opening your spiritual eyes to see wonderful things in His Word (Ps 119:18). Then, slowly and reflectively begin reading the passage you have selected.

As thoughts come to your mind turn them into prayers. For example, if you are reading in the Psalms and the passage speaks of gratefulness take some unhurried time and thank the LORD for specific ways He has been good to you in the past weeks. You may want to pray that the LORD would give a grateful heart to the members of your family or the individuals in your Bible study. Another example may be, if you are reading through the Gospels and see an instance of Christ's compassion for the needy, pause and pray that He would build His compassion into your life. Pray over specific individuals you know have great needs and ask the LORD to show you ways you can express His love towards them.

After you have finished praying all that the first line prompts, continue with the next, then the next. Some verses may suggest little for you to pray. That's fine, just move on until you find a word or phrase that does.

As you become familiar with this method of praying you will find that your desire to pray will increase, and you will need more time for prayer. Don't get frustrated with yourself if you are not able to read all you hope to read during that session. Focus on prayer, not on the amount of reading you do. You can finish your Bible reading later that day.

If you are just beginning this method you may find it helpful to spend your time in the Psalms, Proverbs, or New Testament letters since they tend to be easier to pray than narrative passages.

2. Developing the Discipline of Praying Without Ceasing

In 1 Thess 5:17 Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing". There are two possible ways we can understand this. One is to think of 'without ceasing' as 'long term' or 'enduring'. That is the idea in 1 Samuel 12:23 where Samuel states, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you." The second interpretation of 'without ceasing' is 'continuously', 'constant', 'uninterrupted' 'recurring'. This is the idea Paul is getting at in this passage.

Simply stated, praying without ceasing is a mind that naturally and routinely goes to God in prayer amid the duties, opportunities, and frustrations of a day.

This is illustrated in Colossians 3:1-2 where Paul says, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." The Christian is to have an attitude which is 'set on things above'. This means that he is to seek and cherish eternal things more than temporal ones. And he is to routinely think on those things throughout the day. This is done by meditation and prayer.

How then does a Christian develop a habit of praying ceaselessly?

a. Begin your day by committing to pray throughout the day

Simply take a few moments before you begin the duties of your day and commit to relying on the Lord and filling the day with prayer.

You may find it helpful to collect favorite passages which have impressed you during your daily Bible reading. Review these passages and use them as a reminder of how God will work in your life through the day and how He wants you to respond to Him.

For example, Ps 37:4 and Ps 40:8 both speak of delighting in the LORD. You may begin your day with a prayer like this, "LORD, today I will delight in You regardless of what happens during the day. I trust You to give me what my heart desires. And, I rely on You for the strength to do Your will." With this as your commitment and prayer, go through the day routinely delighting in God, praying for Him to meet your needs, and asking Him for the power to do His will as you enter each situation.

b. View your day as a continuous fellowship with God

Fellowship with God is not something you must 'stop' when you leave church or end your devotional time. Instead, think of your day as continual communion, with occasional interruptions. Train yourself to set your mind on 'things above' during idle moments.

One man imagines his entire day as a continuation of the communion he enjoyed in his morning quiet time. In each situation he watches for opportunities to make practical application of that morning's insights. And he is alert to illustrations of God's personal work in his life throughout the day.

"You might think of praying without ceasing as communicating with God on one line while also taking calls on another. Even while you are talking on the other line, you never lose your awareness of the need to return your attention to the Lord."¹

c. Getting in the Habit

- i) Develop the habit of meditating on Scripture throughout the day. Use the truths in the passage as a "launching pad" for your prayers. Example: "Lord, You promised in Psalm 81:10, "open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." I'm needing you right now, and so I open the mouth of my thirsting soul. I'll watch to see how you fill me in the next few moments. I thank You in advance for Your faithfulness to keep Your promises to me."

¹Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 1997), 64.

- ii) View every situation and relationship that you encounter during your day as an opportunity to experience God.
- iii) As you enter a new situation, send up a mental prayer regarding that circumstance or conversation. Imagine your day being made up of a series of rooms. Each room is a situation. As you enter that room, ask the Lord to be honored by what He performs in and through you. Commit the situation to the Lord and ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit so you might glorify Him in the situation.
- iv) As you walk in this attitude of reliance, obedience, and prayer you will be aware of the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- v) This is a normal and necessary experience for a Christian. By faith, pray for God's leading in each situation, and then anticipate Him providing that leadership. Be alert to impressions, thoughts, or assurances in your conscience. Make certain they are consistent with the word of God. Then, by faith, follow through with what the Lord has led you to do.
- vi) See each temptation as a springboard to prayer. Instead of trying to overcome temptations in the power of your flesh, take your thoughts—temptations and all—to God and ask Him for victory. This can be a great opportunity to pray through a passage of Scripture that deals with victory. (Examples: Luke 10:19; Eph 6:10-12; 2 Thess 3:3; James 4:7; Rev 12:11; Rom 12:21; Rom 13:14; 1 Cor 12:13; Heb 2:18; 1 Jn 4:4; Rom 6:1-23; Col 3:1-17)
- vii) If the Holy Spirit reveals sin to you during the day, be quick to confess it to the Lord and ask Him to forgive you.
- viii) Claim His forgiveness and cleansing based on the promise of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There is no need to wait until the end of the day to appropriate forgiveness and to recommit your life to following the Lord.
- ix) At the close of the day, review and reflect on the root attitudes that gave rise to your sins earlier during the day. Pray for God purge you of those attitudes, and ask Him to instruct and protect you as you encounter temptations the next day.

3. Developing the Habit of Extended Time in Prayer

- a. Prayer Retreats
- b. Prayer Walking

4. Developing the Habit of Corporate (Group) Prayer

- a. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42

b. Five Elements For Leading Effective Small Group Prayer

1. Have defined leadership. The role of the leader is to plan the meeting, create an atmosphere which facilitates freedom and community, remind the members of God's character and ability to answer their prayers, and guide the group to pray freely and earnestly for the matters they have agreed to pray for.

If you are leading the group:

- i. Get the meeting started on time
 - a. This communicates honor to those attending and gives a sense of security.
- ii. Create a comfortable atmosphere characterized by freedom, affirmation, and acceptance.
 - a. Give people an opportunity to visit and discuss how they are doing. They will be more inclined to pray together if they have talked with one another.
 - b. Take time for prayer requests (unless the prayer is to be focused on items prepared in advance by the leader).
 - c. Sit in circles. And be prepared to subdivide the group into smaller groups if necessary.
2. Give an overview of the direction for the meeting.
 - i. This helps people know what to expect.
 - ii. "Here is what I've prepared for tonight. Is there anything we need to add to this list?"
 - iii. Let the group list requests.

3. Initiate the group's prayer.
 - i. Take a moment to bring the group into an attitude which encourages their prayer.
 - ii. Sing a praise song together.
 - iii. Read a Psalm or Scripture promise.
 - iv. Give your group time to meditate on God's goodness, His power, His eagerness to answer, His glory.
 - v. Give the group time to silently confess any known sin or to cast any personal burdens on the LORD.

4. Next, give the group a simple plan for praying over the matters outlined at the beginning of the meeting.
 - i. Mention to the group, "Let's take the next _____ minutes and pray about _____."
 - ii. It may facilitate the group if the leader goes ahead and prays for that subject.
 - iii. Or, the leader may want to request one of the members to begin their prayer for the matter to be prayed about.
 - iv. The leader may want to mention something like this, "Let's pray about _____. After 3 or 4 of us have prayed, we'll move on to the next prayer item."
 - v. Give the group unhurried time to pray before moving on to the next item.

5. What to do with silence?
 - i. The leader should admit to the group that silence is inevitable and that people usually feel awkward when there are long pauses in the prayer time.
 - ii. He should then help the group recognize that silence does not mean there is something *wrong*. Nor does it mean someone has to *make noise* by

making up a prayer. Rather, the group should cherish the silence as a time to focus on the Lord.

- iii. Instruct group members to use silence to evaluate the motives of your heart.

c. Praying in a Small Group

1. Pray concisely – honor the others in the group by not dominating the time by going on and on and on.
2. Pray authentically and earnestly – pray in a way that is passionate and is consistent with your personality.
3. Pray one point at a time.
4. Pray clearly – pray loudly enough that others can hear you, and use statements that help everyone know what you mean by what you say.
5. Don't allow prayer to become a form of gossip - don't verbalize confidential information.

Why Are So Many Christians such Wimps when it comes to Prayer?

Don Whitney gives these possible answers:²

1. Why, then, do so many believers confess that they do not pray as they should? Sometimes the problem is primarily a lack of discipline.
 - a. We fail to plan to pray.
 - b. We give up and fail to persist in prayer. In other words, we quit too easily.
2. We doubt that anything will actually happen if we pray.
 - a. We don't understand God's ways.
 - b. We don't have patience and persistence.
3. We lack a sense of the nearness of God, and thus we become discouraged with prayer.
4. We see little real need (i.e. "I can handle this on my own."), thus there is little real prayer.
5. When our awareness of the greatness of God and the gospel is dim, our prayer lives will be small.

6. Another reason many Christians pray so little is because they haven't learned about prayer.
 7. Busy: the barrenness of a busy life.
- I would add for the sake of the guys...
8. We don't see prayer as a "guy thing." 'Real Men' don't need to pray.

Prayer Essentials

1. You must be saved

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight." Proverbs 15:8

"The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous." Proverbs 15:29

"We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him." John 9:31

2. Desire God and His will

"But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul." Deuteronomy 4:29

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." James 4:8

3. Confession of any known sin

"If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." Psalm 66:18

4. Thankfulness for God's provision

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

"Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15

5. Faith that God will answer

"But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord." James 1:6-7

Prayer is developed by meditation on Scripture

Meditation may be the most fruitful way to grow in prayer. You combine meditation on God's Word—which is God speaking to you—with prayer—which is you (primarily) speaking to God. This allows your prayers to be in response to what God is saying to you or to have your prayer requests answered more thoroughly.

"Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my groaning." Psalm 5:1

Here we have David reflecting on the virtues of the Word of God:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward." Psalm 19:7-11

Here we have David's prayer, in response to his meditation on God's Word:

"Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me; then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:12-14

Quotes and explanations of this concept

"Meditation is the missing link between Bible intake and prayer."²

"And our speaking to ourselves in meditation, should go before our speaking to God in prayer."³

"David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations; as meditation is the best preparation for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer go together."⁴

One of the most prolific Puritan preacher/writers was Thomas Manton. In a message on Isaac's meditation in the field (refer to Genesis 24:63), he points

² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 67.

³ Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter: Select Treatises* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 103.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 3 (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell,

directly to meditation as the link between Bible intake and prayer. He wrote, "Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the word and prayer, and hath respect to both. The word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer. These duties must always go hand in hand; meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer. To hear and not to meditate is unfruitful. We may hear and hear, but it is like putting a thing into a bag with holes...It is rashness to pray and not to meditate. What we take in by the word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer. These three duties must be ordered that one may not jostle out the other. Men are barren, dry, and sapless in their prayers for want of exercising themselves in holy thoughts."⁵

First, study and meditate – then, pray in response

William Bates, called 'that most classic and cultured of the later Puritan preachers' said, "What is the reason that our desires like an arrow shot by a weak bow do not reach the mark? But only this, we do not meditate before prayer...The great reason why our prayers are ineffectual, is because we do not meditate before them."⁶

William Bridge, one of the best of practical Puritan writers, penned the following about meditation. "As it is the sister of reading, so it is the mother of prayer. Though a man's heart be much indisposed to prayer, yet, if he can but fall into a meditation of God, and the things of God, his heart will soon come off to prayer...Begin with reading or hearing. Go with meditation; end in prayer . . . Reading without meditation is unfruitful; meditation without reading is hurtful; to meditate and to read without prayer upon both is without blessing."⁷

A modern British writer, Peter Toon, in his book *From Mind to Heart*, summarizes the teaching of the Puritans on these things, "To read the Bible and not to meditate was seen as an unfruitful exercise: better to read one chapter and meditate afterward than to read several chapters and not to meditate. Likewise to meditate and not to pray was like preparing to run a race and never leaving the starting line. The three duties of reading Scripture, meditation, and prayer

belonged together, and though each could be done occasionally on its own, as formal duties to God they were best done together."⁸

George Müller operated an orphanage in Bristol, England, for two-thirds of the 19th century. He cared for as many as two thousand orphans at a single time and supported mission work throughout the world. Millions of dollars came through his hands. He did all of this without ever incurring any debt or ever soliciting or advertising. His tens of thousands of recorded answers to prayer are legendary.

"Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing was to give myself to the reading of God's Word, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.

"I began therefore to *meditate* on the New Testament from the beginning early in the morning. *The first thing I did*, after having asked in a few words of the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, *was to begin to meditate on the Word of God*, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word of God, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less to prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, *as the Word may lead to it*, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my *meditation*. *The result of this is that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation*, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart.

"The difference, then, between my former practice and my present one is this: formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer . . . But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees before being conscious to

⁵ Thomas Manton, *The Works of Thomas Manton*, reprinted by Maranatha Publications, n.d. Worthington, PA, pp. 272-273.

⁶ William Bates, *The Whole Works of the Rev. W. Bates*, Arr. and rev. by W. Farmer, Vol. 3, reprint (Harrisburg, PA: Sprinkle, 1990), 130.

⁷ William Bridge, *The Words of the Reverend William Bridge*, vol. 3, reprint (Beaver Falls, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1989), 132, 154.

⁸ Peter Toon, *From Mind to Heart: Christian Meditation Today* (Grand Rapids, MI:

myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of the soul, etc.; and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then really began to pray.

"I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word. It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point . . . And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man.

"Now what is food for the inner man? *Not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water passes through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it and applying it to our hearts.*

"When we pray we speak to God. Now prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season therefore when this exercise of the soul can be more effectually performed is after the inner man has been nourished by *meditation on the Word of God*, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us. We may therefore profitably *meditate* with God's blessing though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need *meditation* for the strengthening of our inner man. Thus there is far less to be feared from wandering of mind than if we give ourselves to prayer without having had time previously for *meditation*.

"I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God, I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials, in various ways, than I have ever had before; and having now above fourteen years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it."⁹

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The Habit of Giving

1. The basic principle behind the *Habit of Giving* is that everything belongs to God.

"The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." Psalm 24:1

2. He entrusts some of His property to you and to me to be properly administered for His purposes. In that sense we are stewards.

Stewards are entrusted with the care of property of an owner.

The steward is free to use some of the property to meet his own needs.

But the property is not his. It is ultimately the owner's. The property has been entrusted to the steward to be managed according to the owner's wishes, not the steward's wishes. The owner will ask the steward to give an account of how he managed the resources entrusted to him.

"So the question is not, "How much of my money should I give to God?" but rather, "How much of God's money should I keep for myself?"¹⁰

⁹ Roger Steer, *Spiritual Secrets of George Müller* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1985), 60–62, emphasis mine. (American rights granted by publisher)

¹⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 141.

3. There are three broad purposes which guide the use of the property and money entrusted to us.

First, to use it to worship God.

“But I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.” Phil 4:18 (NIV)

Second, to meet your needs.

“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Phil 4:19 (NIV)

Third, to meet the needs of others.

“Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.” Phil 4:14-16

Nine Biblical Insights into the Habit of Giving

1. Give from a Heart Submitted to God

“And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” 2 Corinthians 8:5

2. Give with Spiritual Benefits in View

“You will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all.”

2 Corinthians 9:11–13

3. Give Anticipating an Abundant Return

“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.” 2 Corinthians 9:6

4. **Give Sincerely**

"I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also." 2 Corinthians 8:8

5. **Give Cheerfully**

"Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

6. **Give Quietly**

"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:2-4

7. **Give Sacrificially**

"Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well." 2 Corinthians 8:1-6

"He who gives, with liberality." Romans 12:8

8. **Give Routinely**

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come." 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

9. **Give Spontaneously**

"You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs." Philippians 4:15-16

The Habit of Serving

You are called and gifted to serve

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10

“For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” Luke 22:27

Every Christian is expected to serve

“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:14

The Six Motivations for Serving

1. I serve out of an obedient heart

“You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.”

Deuteronomy 13:4

John Newton, the slave trader who became a pastor following his conversion to Christ and wrote such hymns as “Amazing Grace,” illustrates obedient service as follows:

“If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth’s grandest empire, the other to go and sweep the streets of its meanest village, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot, the post of ruler or the post of scavenger; for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God’s will.”¹¹

Can you imagine one of those angels refusing to serve? It’s unthinkable. It was the unwillingness to serve God that once turned some angels into demons. I suspect the same with churchgoers.

¹¹ E.M. Bonds, *The Essentials of Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 19.

2. I am grateful

"Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

3. I am glad

"Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing." Psalm 100:2

"What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?" Psalm 116:12

"So this joy of mine has been made full." John 3:29

4. I am forgiven

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
Isaiah 6:6-8

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Ephesians 4:31

5. I serve out of humility

Servanthood is a true, perpetual

"So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him."" John 13:12-16

Richard Foster talks about "self-righteous service": "Self-righteous service requires external rewards. It needs to know that people see and appreciate the effort. It seeks human applause—with proper religious modesty of course. . . Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. It eagerly wants to see if the person served will reciprocate in kind . . . The flesh whines against service but screams against hidden service. It strains and pulls for honor and

recognition. It will devise subtle, religiously acceptable means to call attention to the service rendered."¹²

6. I serve out of love

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Galatians 5:13

The Servant in Action

Insights drawn from Jesus' story known as "the Good Samaritan."

1. Be Alert to and Concerned for the Needs of Those You Serve

Luke 10:33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion."

Essential Attitudes

- Attentiveness
- Value others above yourself. Look past what annoys you and look for the image of God in them.
- Be Humble — [see yourself as the servant]

Questions that Communicate Concern

- "How are things going?"
- "How can I help?"

2. Be Flexible With Your Schedule so You can Meet Needs

Luke 10:33 "But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey..."

Essential Attitudes and Qualities

- Make people, not tasks, your priority.
- Build a margin in your schedule.
- Trust God to get the work done you feel obligated to do.

¹² Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 112, 114.

3. Take Initiative to Meet Needs.

Luke 10:34 “And came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Essential Attitudes and Qualities

- **Flexibility** —a basic factor in flexibility is setting your affections on the needs of others rather than on your own interests and preferences.
- Joy
- Hard work
- Laying up treasures in Heaven—serving, as Jesus imagined it, requires us to live this life with the future life in mind.

4. Make the Success and Well-being of Others Your Priority

Luke 10:35 “On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.””

Essential Attitudes and Qualities

- Faithfulness
- Persistence
- Endurance
- Sacrifice

How to Develop a Lifestyle of Service

Begin praying for an attentiveness to opportunities around you.

Find a ministry in the church in which you can get involved.

Attend **Discovering Ministry 301**

Will you serve?

“And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15

The Habit of Fellowship

Fellowship is a privilege

What is fellowship? Fellowship (koinonia) means communion partnership, to share in something. In the New Testament it speaks first of a believer's relationship with Jesus Christ:

"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9

"Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we should no longer be slaves to sin; . . . Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

Romans 6:6, 8

"And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." Romans 8:17

"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us."

2 Timothy 2:12

Second, fellowship among Christians speaks of our relationships with other believers. All fellowship among Christians is based on the fellowship we have with God through Christ.

This is portrayed clearly in 1 John 1:3, "What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

John MacArthur wrote, "Anybody in fellowship with Jesus Christ is also in fellowship with anybody else in fellowship with Jesus Christ. This is our common ground. It is not social, economic, intellectual, cosmetic, or anything else superficial. Our common ground is that we possess a common eternal life and are children in the same family."¹³

Christians share many things: eternal life in Christ, the death, burial and Resurrection, the Word. We share a common gift – the Holy Spirit. We are partners in carrying out the Great Commission.

When we fellowship with other believers, we are sharing our spiritual life

1. Socializing is sharing the common things of human life, or earthly life.
2. Fellowship involves the sharing of spiritual life.

Fellowship always takes place in the context of socializing, but not all socializing is fellowship.

The church too often substitutes socializing for fellowship.

As theologian J.I. Packer puts it: "It is not a good sign when a person sees no difference between sucking sweets and eating a square meal. Equally it is not a good sign when Christians see no difference between social activities in Christian company and what the New Testament calls fellowship in Christ."¹⁴

Whitney writes: "It looks like this: two or more Christians can sit together for hours, talking only of the news, weather, and sports while completely ignoring their need to discuss directly spiritual matters. I'm not saying that every conversation between Christians must include references to Bible verses, recent answers to prayer, or insights from today's devotional time. But I've observed that many otherwise committed Christians are so independent in their practice of the Spiritual Disciplines that they almost never talk about such things on a heart level. And without personal interaction about the mutual interests, problems, and aspirations of discipleship, our spiritual lives are impoverished.

Then at the end of the day, having merely socialized, we think we have had fellowship. Only Christians can have the rich banquet koinonia, but too often we settle for little more than the fast-food kind of socializing which even the world can experience."¹⁵

"Fellowship can happen simply by two or more believers in Christ talking with each other from their knowledge of and experience with God and His Word. It can happen almost anywhere at almost any time. A type of fellowship occurs when Christians listen together as God is revealed through His Word preached. *Koinonia* takes place when believers pray with each other. Fellowship should always grow in the soil of small group Bible study. It can be experienced while working in the church with a fellow member, while ministering with another to someone in need, or during a team effort to explain the gospel to an outsider. It should thrive when Christians eat a meal together. Whenever the children of God share *earthly* life – husbands and wives at home in the evening, friends riding in the car or shopping at the mall, moms exercising with each other, business people on the phone together, neighbors helping neighbors – they can share their *spiritual* life."¹⁶

5. Fellowship is intentional, and should result in spiritual growth

"And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." Heb 10:24-25

A List of Some "One-Anothers" of Fellowship:

- Love one another (John 13:34)
- Admonish and encourage one another (Rom 15:14; Hebrews 3:13)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10).
- Speak truth to one another (Eph 4:25)
- Rejoice with one another (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26).

¹³ John MacArthur, Jr., *The Church: The Body of Christ* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1981), 51.

¹⁴ J.I. Packer, *Body Life* (privately printed by Tenth, 1981), 63.

¹⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 67.

¹⁶ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines Within The Church*, Moody Publishers, 1996, p. 151.

- Weep with one another (Romans 12:15)
- Greet one another with holy greetings (Rom 16:16)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Seek after that which is good for one another (1 Thess 5:15)
- Forbear with one another and forgive each other (Col 3:13)

- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Don't judge one another (Romans 14:13)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)

Seven Basic Heart Attitudes which Foster Fellowship

1. I will put the goals and interests of others above my own.

"Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Philippians 2:4

2. I will live an honest, open life before others.

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." Ephesians 4:25

3. I will give and receive correction within Scriptural limits.

"But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:13

4. I will clear up troubled relationships.

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32

5. I will participate in the ministry of my church.

"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." 1 Peter 4:10

6. I will support the ministry of my church financially.

"Contributing to the needs of the saints." Rom 12:13

7. I will follow spiritual leadership within Scriptural limits, and make it a joy to them.

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." Hebrews 13:17

Three Steps to Connecting with your Church:

1. Attend the main meetings of the church
2. Join a small group that meets regularly for fellowship, prayer and Bible study
3. Participate in a ministry for which you have a passion

The Habit of Sharing Your Faith

“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” 1 Peter 3:15

Every day, without prompting, begging, or cajoling, we talk to people about our families, sports, houses, cars, vacations and a host of other things. No one has to teach us to do this because it is quite natural to share about things that are **important** to us. Actually, it is incredibly difficult not to talk about these things because they are so much a part of our life. Without any fanfare, we witness everyday about the things that excite us and are important to us.

Hmmm, maybe that is the key to witnessing for Christ. You know, if He is a significant part of our life, and we are excited about Him, we **will** witness. Maybe our shyness, lack of time or opportunity is really a lack of excitement, thankfulness, and devotion?

We are called to serve and commanded to share our faith

1. Requirements for telling someone about Jesus Christ.

- a. You have personally experienced salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.
- b. You are excited and want others to know about what you **have**. *The reason I don't like to talk about my experience as a pro-football star is that I am not a pro-football star. It is difficult to talk about an experience you have not had.*

2. Requirement for being believed when you witness.

Live a life that reflects what you're talking about. If you love to talk about the importance of a clean house, you better get the cobwebs out of the corners.

3. Five ways of sharing your faith

a. Witnessing

Description

Sharing your testimony: Telling what Christ has done and is doing in your life.

Vital Skills

- Learn to share your testimony in five minutes
- Learn to share your testimony in two minutes
- Learn to share your testimony in one minute

Components of your testimony

- Pre-salvation: Share what life was like before you became a Christian
- Salvation experience: Describe how you came to faith in Christ
- Post-salvation: Share evidences that Christ is living in you and changing you

b. Evangelizing

Description

Explain the gospel: Sharing Scriptures that convey the gospel.

Vital Skills

- The Roman Road
- The Bridge Illustration
- The Four Spiritual Laws
- Steps to Peace with God

c. Speaking the truth in love

Description

Sharing the mind of God on the topic of conversation.

Vital Skills

- Learn to be conversant on everyday events, biblical truths and current events in order to give the biblical perspective. This would include such things as: marriage, children, employee/employer relationships, debt, sickness, trials and tragedies, citizenship, education, war, etc. When possible, relate the conversation to the gospel.

d. **Example**

Description

Live a life that is consistent with what you say.

Vital Skills

- Exemplify godly character
- Demonstrate Christian love, care and concern
- Be patient. This may be over a short or very long period of time

Observation

Your example is not a replacement for sharing the truth of Scripture since “faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17); however, it is essential in giving credibility to what you say.

e. **Apologetics**

Description

Share why you believe what you believe.

Vital Skill

- Be able to give a reasonable explanation for your faith

Summary:

Witnessing requires an experience, Evangelizing requires an experience and knowing the gospel, Speaking the truth in love requires concerted effort to know the Scripture and the culture you live in, Apologetics require considerable effort and concern for answering the tough questions, all of these require supernatural love for Christ and others.

4. Maintaining motivation for sharing your faith

- a. Keep your private communion with Christ fresh and growing. (1 Peter 3:15; John 14:15)
- b. Live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8)
- c. Stay reminded of the needs and the opportunities around you. (John 4:35)
- d. Minister through a church that is passionate about ministering to your city. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- e. Pray about sharing your faith. (Acts 4:31)

5. Personal styles of evangelism

a. The Inviter

Characteristics: People with this style are hospitable, relational, and PERSUASIVE. They enjoy meeting new people and are often seen with new friends.

Skills to develop: Invite people to regular spiritual events or special events.

b. The Testimony Giver

Characteristics: Characteristics of this style may include: being a clear communicator, a story teller, and GOOD LISTENER. They can draw clear connections between the situation the hearer is facing, and his/her own personal story.

Caution: Beware of talking about yourself but not relating your experience to the other person's life. You first need to listen to them, to be able to connect your story to their situation.

c. The Confronter

Characteristics: Characteristics of people with this style might be that they are confident, assertive, and DIRECT. They also might not

like small talk. They might seldom experience fear or nervousness about witnessing.

Caution: Be sure to use tact when confronting people with truth. If they are offended, be certain it is the gospel they are rejecting, not your offensive personality.

d. The Servant

Characteristics: People with the Serving Style are not serving people instead of evangelizing them. Rather, they evangelize through their serving. Their selfless acts of kindness open the door of opportunity to speak about God, often with people who would be difficult or impossible to reach with any of the other styles.

Servant evangelists are generally others-centered, humble, and PATIENT.

Caution: Just as words are no substitute for actions, actions are no substitute for words.

e. The Interpersonal

Characteristics: People with this style tend to be warm personality, conversational, and FRIENDSHIP-ORIENTED. They tend to focus on people and their needs more than on ideas, issues and worldviews.

Caution: You will need to avoid valuing friendship over truth-telling. Presenting the gospel often means challenging a person's whole direction in life, and that can mean causing friction in your relationship.

f. The Reasoner

Characteristics: People with this style tend to be inquisitive, analytical, and LOGICAL. They may like to debate, and they enjoy working with ideas. They tend to ask questions like "What do you think?" "Why?" or "How do you know?"

Caution: First, do not substitute giving answers for giving the gospel message. Second, be careful not to become argumentative.