

Prayer IS Work

It requires time, confession of sin, persistence, and surrendering your desires so God can transform you and others.

There was no shortage of work on my family's small farm in central Illinois. As the eldest with no brothers, I became my dad's "right-hand apprentice." I learned every tool in his shop, poured concrete, fixed fences, and did whatever else was needed. Some 50 years later, I'm grateful for the experiences. I'm proud to have learned the value of hard work.

My prayer life, however, did not have as strong a foundation—no pride found there. Sure, I heard people pray at church and the Ladies' Aid Society, so I knew it was necessary. I tried, but I didn't know how or where to begin. Years later, at an English-speaking Baptist church in Germany, God used my Sunday School teacher as a mentor and prayer partner. Weekly we met to pursue God, not through casual conversation but through prayer.

Do you view prayer as work and an integral part of your Christian occupation? Romans 12:12 calls us to be "faithful in prayer." In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul said to "pray continually." Sounds like a full-time job to me! Early twentieth-century Scottish Baptist evangelist Oswald Chambers wrote, "Prayer does not fit us for the greater works; prayer is the greater work." Let's examine what that work includes.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Throw out your resume, because we do not come to God with our educational accomplishments and a list of good works. We go to Him with a repentant heart and a need for a Savior. The main question is, Have you placed your faith in Christ? If your answer is no, bow your head and ask Him to forgive you of your sin and be your Savior and Lord. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, drawing you to God, this first prayer begins a lifelong practice of learning how to communicate and develop a relationship with God.

THE POLICY MANUAL

The Bible is your guide to success in the work of prayer. God's law, promises, precepts, and proverbs can be found in its pages. The stories show ordinary people dealing with life's struggles and victories. Moses offered excuses to God but tuned himself to service beyond what he imagined, leading the nation of Israel. Joshua struggled with what God wanted him to do but prayerfully and obediently followed. Hannah fasted and

prayed, and God answered her prayer for a son. Elijah's prayer called down fire! King Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kings 19:14–19) begged God for deliverance. Esther led a group of women to fast and pray for God's will when she was asked to do a hard thing. David's psalms reveal praise, worship, and lament. He prayed through sorrow, anger, and joy. Daniel's regular prayer schedule drew the attention of his enemies in such a way that landed him in trouble, but God used Daniel to influence nations. These are not simple stories—they are profound examples of how to pray.

Why is prayer hard? Ephesians 6:10–20 reminds us that our battle is against the powers of darkness. Second Corinthians 10 tells us that



we must rely on divine power to engage in the battle. Our sin may hold back the influence of God's power through us (1 John 1:9).

Paul's writings in the New Testament show he was often overwhelmed by his circumstances. Suffering rarely comes on our timetable, making the work of prayer difficult. Paul's call to praying and praising in the middle of difficulties reminds us of the strength prayer offers.

As you read the Gospels, be attentive to the number of times Jesus spoke to His Father. The most significant example of prayer being hard work is found in the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His death on the Cross (Matt. 26:36-45; Mark 14:32-41). Christ,

in agony, willingly took the cup that was before Him. He obeyed the will of His Father. Time, confession of sin, persistence, and surrendering our desires are the work of prayer we learn from God's Word.

BENEFITS

The benefits of prayer far exceed the benefits of your employer such as health and life insurance. Our spiritual benefits include access to God at any time, mercy, grace, love, peace, courage, strength, blessings, and so much more. Our vision improves because the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the truth.

Learn from those who have benefitted before you. Read or listen to testimonies of our faith heroes,

prayer warriors like T. W. Hunt, Elaine Helms, Henry Blackaby, or others you may know personally. Be encouraged by their faith and perseverance. Missionaries are co-laborers. Meet with them and listen to their stories of answered prayer. Learn how God is at work transforming lives. Find ways you can pray for them and encourage them through prayer; begin with praying for them on their birthdays with Prayer Patterns. Fast and pray. The benefits are beyond measure, kingdom shaking, and you come away changed because you have spent time in the presence of the Lord.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

At the end of a workday, when tasks are completed, there is a sense of accomplishment. As you spend time in prayer, there is a peace in knowing you've entrusted everything to the Father. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7 NKJV). Answers to prayers may not be visible or tangible. But we can know contentment, joy, comfort, and strength, which come as we trust God and His timing in our lives.

Our prayers can make an eternal difference in the lives of people around the globe. All the glory belongs to God; we are merely instruments with the privilege of prayer. The work of prayer changes you and transforms the lives of others. Years ago, one of my prayer heroes, T. W. Hunt, wrote these words in my Bible: "May God use your prayers to enlarge His Kingdom!" Under this, he wrote Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 4:2, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Will God's kingdom be enlarged because of our work in prayer? Prayer IS work. Let's get started! **M**

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