



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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DEPENDENCE ON GOD

How much do you depend on God? There is no doubt that every believer would declare that he or she is dependent on God. God is our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. From these truths, one can logically deduce that the believer is dependent on God. It is an obvious truth.

Yet, on a daily basis, how much do you depend on God? You may believe that you must rely on God. You might quote **John 15:5**, "For without Me, you can do nothing." But, on the practical level, in the daily grind of life, how much do you surrender your daily affairs and struggles to your Father? Who do you rely on more: yourself or God?

God desires that you grow in your dependence on Him. When you first surrendered your life to Christ, you entered into a personal relationship with God. God became your Father; you became His child. Just as a child depends on his or her parents, your heavenly Father wants you to depend on Him. The Christian life is not characterized by rugged self-reliance but broken dependence on your Father.

Your surrender to and dependence on God in your first days as a Christian was weak and immature at best. You surrendered as much as you knew. And, of course, you relied on Him the best you knew how. Yet, God now longs for you to move into a deeper dependence, a steady reliance on Him and His power. He wants a daily surrender of you, your life, and your plans. God desires that you walk in a spirit of surrender and dependence.

God desires that you deal with the self-sufficient, self-reliant spirit that exists in all of us. In fact, He hates the spirit of self-sufficiency, "But He gives more grace. Wherefore He says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (**James 4:6**). Self-sufficiency sickens our God. Jesus declared to the church at Laodicea that He was about to vomit them out of His mouth. His reason? "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (**Revelation 3:16-17**). The Laodiceans' self-sufficiency nauseated Christ. Relying on one's self is an evil that grieves God.

The same is true in your life. He hates your self-reliance. Your self-sufficiency grieves Him. He yearns for you to forsake trusting in yourself, depending on your own wisdom and power. He desires that you learn to grow in your dependence on Him. He wants you to walk in this on a daily basis.

How can you learn to grow in your dependence on God? Prayer is the essential element as you are in the process of learning how to rely on your Father. The prayer life of Hannah provides us an example of how prayer enables you to grow in your dependence on God. From her prayer life, there are five basic lessons that you must learn and put into practice if you're going to develop a spirit of daily dependence on God

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Use your circumstances as a motivation to pray (1 Samuel 1:1-10)

The book of 1 Samuel opens by introducing us to a man by the name of Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had many sons and daughters. However, Hannah was barren. Her rival, Peninnah, ridiculed her for her lack of children, "And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat" (1 Samuel 1:6-7).

The circumstances of Hannah's life caused her great sorrow. Think about her situation. *She had no children.* Hannah believed what Solomon later wrote in **Psalm 127:3, 5**, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward . . . Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them." Yet, Hannah had no children and had no hope of ever having children. *Then, Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, taunted and mocked her because she did not have a child.* Peninnah did not feel sorry for Hannah, but used this as an opportunity to try and gain favor with Elkanah. She was immature, selfish, and insensitive. *Finally, her husband did not understand what she was experiencing.* The Bible declares in **1 Samuel 1:8**, "Then Elkanah her husband said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?'" The mockery of Peninnah drove Hannah into uncontrollable weeping and hurled her into deep depression. Her husband did not sympathize with her nor did he weep with her. Elkanah was telling Hannah to snap out of the depression and move on, which is usually the best way to send a person deeper into depression.

How did Hannah respond to these circumstances? She could have easily shouted back at Peninnah and fought with her. She could have lost her temper with her husband and had it out with him. She could even have resented God for closing her womb. Yet, she did none of those things. In response to her circumstances, Hannah prayed, "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to

the LORD and wept in anguish" (1 Samuel 1:10). Her circumstances afforded her an opportunity to depend on God through prayer.

Developing a spirit of dependence on God requires that you use your circumstances as a motivation to pray. It affords you the opportunity to seek God concerning the circumstance. How many times has prayer been a last resort for you? Your circumstances can be a tool for leading you to pray and depend on God.

When believers are confronted with problems or tests of their faith, their response is often to take matters into their own hands. They attempt to deal with their circumstances by their own power and wisdom. Some believers retreat into an emotional shell. Rather than depend on God, they look for some way to solve their problem or run from the test of their faith.

If you are going to grow in your dependence on God, you must use your circumstances as motivation to pray. You must enter God's presence, surrendering the circumstance or the concern to Him. Prayer is an act of dependence. You are committing the circumstances into God's hands, seeking His wisdom and power. It is confessing that you are not sufficient to deal with what you are facing, but that God is sufficient. You must humble yourself before Him and ask for His wisdom and power concerning the situation. Rather than making prayer your last resort, it must become your first instinctive response. Rather than taking matters into your own hands, use your circumstances as a motivation to pray and depend on God. Let your circumstances move you to walk in a spirit of dependence on God through prayer. Commit the circumstances of your life into God's hands as you face them.

Be willing to trust God even when you have no answers (1 Samuel 1:11)

Hannah's prayer to God is recorded in **1 Samuel 1:11**, "Then she made a vow and said, 'O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the

LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

Hannah poured her heart out to God. She pled with God to give her a son. At first glance, it sounds like she is trying to make a deal with God. It appears that she is saying, “Lord, if you give me a son, I’ll give him back to You.” This is simply not true. God does not make deals and doesn’t bargain off His blessings.

Why then did Hannah make this vow? She wanted a son in order to present her greatest treasure to the Lord as an offering. She prayed for just one son, but she was willing to surrender him to the Lord. She did not long for a son because she wanted to get back at Peninnah or Elkanah. She did not want to make any deals with God; she simply wanted to glorify Him.

In this verse, she refers to herself three times as the Lord’s “maidservant.” This is a reference to her humble, broken trust in the Lord. She committed her circumstance to the Lord in prayer. Then she trusted in God for the outcome. She made no demands of God; she simply expressed her trust in the Lord. She had no answers or solution concerning her barrenness. Yet, she trusted in the Lord.

Growing in your dependence on God demands that you trust Him when you have no answers. In fact, this is the heart of learning to depend on Him. The truth is, you’re often not going to have answers. You are not going to know immediately what God wants to do. You will not often receive instant answers. You will have to walk by faith. But isn’t that what God desires? God’s Word declares, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 **Corinthians 5:7**). You may not have answers or solutions, but you still have God. He desires that you trust him even in these times.

Isaiah 50:10 declares, “Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God.” You may fear and obey the Lord. You may love Him. But, there will be times when you have to walk in the dark. You will have to trust Him even in the dark. You are not going to have any answers or solutions. Your response must be to trust in the name of the Lord and rely on Him.

Learning to depend on God means being a humble, dependent servant. It requires committing

yourself and your circumstances into God’s hands. It demands casting yourself on the goodness and mercy of God. Through prayer, you can do this. By praying, you can bring your circumstances and requests to Him. And, you can humbly wait for Him even when you have no answers. As you pray, you will find that He is sufficient and that His answers will come in His time and His way. You will find that He is a God who can be trusted. You will discover the truth of Joseph Scrivens hymn “What A Friend We Have In Jesus”,

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Realize that you have a High Priest who understands you (1 Samuel 1:12-14)

Hannah prayed to God in the Tabernacle. She was not alone. Eli, the high priest, saw her praying, “And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth” (1 **Samuel 1:12**). He saw her lips moving but heard no words. Because of this, he jumped to the conclusion that she was drunk, “Now Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, ‘How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!’” (1 **Samuel 1:13-14**).

Eli misunderstood Hannah’s sorrow and her fervent praying. He was the priest of God’s people. Yet, when Hannah was filled with the Spirit and pouring her heart out in prayer, he thought that she was drunk. He misunderstood her. He was insensitive to her. He had no idea the depth of the misery that she was experiencing.

Learning to depend on God calls for a sober realization that others may not understand or be able to help. God blesses the believer with family, friends, and spiritual leaders to help, to encourage, and to guide. Yet, there will come times when all of these may not understand. They may not

understand your struggle, your pain, your desire, or your decisions. They may even misunderstand you. They might even add to your burden. They may not be able to help you.

Look at Hannah's situation. Who did she have to turn to? She couldn't turn to Peninnah, Elkanah, or Eli, the high priest? They did not understand what she was going through in her life. They even added to her burden. The only one she could turn to was her Lord, who knew her and understood her.

The same is true in your life. Learning to depend on God means realizing that He may be the only One who can understand you and help you. You have a High Priest, Jesus Christ, in heaven who understands you, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (**Hebrews 4:15**). Jesus is intimately acquainted with pouring your heart out to God, "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of godly fear" (**Hebrews 5:7**). Jesus even sympathizes with you in your struggle to depend on God on a daily basis, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (**Hebrews 5:8**). He loves you and understands you more than anyone else does. You can depend on Him because of His walking in dependence on the Father and His understanding of you. He has been where you are now and He can guide you through it.

Bring your burdens to the Lord and leave them there (1 Samuel 1:15-18)

Hannah was quick to explain to the mistaken priest what was going on, "But Hannah answered and said, 'No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now'" (**1 Samuel 1:15-16**). Eli encouraged her with these words, "Go

in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him" (**1 Samuel 1:17**).

Hannah's reaction to all this is startling, "So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad" (**1 Samuel 1:18**). Before this, she was weeping and experiencing deep bitterness. Yet, now Hannah is peaceful and content. What has made the difference? She poured her heart out and committed her situation into God's hands. She brought her burden to the Lord through prayer and left it there.

Eli did not give her an absolute assurance that her prayer would be answered. He simply says, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him" (**1 Samuel 1:17**). Yet, Hannah's calm and confident trust flowed out of the fact that she gave this burden to the Lord. Her bitter weeping gave way to a calm trust after she had prayed.

You grow in your dependence on God when you commit your burdens and struggles to Him. This is what God desires from you. He longs for you to commit all of your life to Him, including your burdens, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (**1 Peter 5:7**). ~~God cares for you;~~ He does not want you to feel that you are alone in your problems and struggles. He desires that you commit these aspects of your life to Him. And He longs for you to leave them with Him. He does not want you to experience worry or frustration because of these things.

I realize that this point can be a trite saying, a cliché that is easily thrown around by Christians. Yet, learning to depend on God does mean that you discipline yourself to commit the circumstances of your life to your Father. Walking with God on a daily basis means sharing your burdens and problems with Him. And it requires that you leave them with Him. It demands that you trust Him with them. It calls for you to believe that God can and will handle whatever you commit to Him.

Bringing and leaving your burdens with your Father does not mean that you bury your head in the sand. It does not mean that you blindly forget about the burden or the problem. But, it does mean trusting God with the concerns of your life. It is praying about the details of your life with the expectation that God is going to guide you and work through everything in your life. It is facing the burdens and the problems of your life with a

calm assurance and trust that God is with you and that He will answer you.

There may be times when you have to surrender some problems and burdens on a regular basis through prayer. Sometimes you will have to persist in committing things to God. It may be a particularly heavy burden or problem that keeps coming to mind. You may have continual reminders of it in your life. For this reason, you may have to surrender it in prayer on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis.

This is exactly what God wants from you—a prayerful dependence. He does not want you laboring to handle all the burdens of your life alone. Your Father wants you to commit these things to Him. And He wants you to leave them with Him. He longs for you to pour your heart out to Him and trust Him to work in your circumstances.

Thank God for the blessings that He grants in your life

(1:19-2:10)

God honored Hannah's faith. He blessed her with a son, Samuel (1 Samuel 1:19-20). Because of this, she was careful to give God the credit for this answered prayer. Hannah named this son, "Samuel". Samuel means "heard of God" or "answered by God". Every time she called him by name, it would be a reminder that God had given him in answer to prayer. Every time she called his name, it would remind her of God's faithfulness to hear and answer prayer.

The second chapter of 1 Samuel is Hannah's song of praise to God. In this song of praise, she exalts the Lord and thanks Him for the blessing of this son. She begins this prayer of praise with these words, "My heart rejoices in the LORD, my horn is exalted in the LORD, I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation" (1 Samuel 2:1). Hannah poured out the bitterness of her soul to God; yet she also poured out the praise of her heart to Him.

Depending on God means that you praise and thank God for what He does in response to your praying. He does want you to cast your cares on Him. He yearns for you to bring your burdens to Him. Yet, at the same time, He longs for your

praise and thanks when He acts in your life. He is worthy to be praised and thanked all the time. Yet, our motivation to praise Him and thank Him should be fueled when He acts in response to our broken, desperate praying.

It seems that our praying is intense and passionate when we are troubled. You know, it appears that we pray better when the pressure is on—when our backs are to the wall. Yet, we seem to lose that intensity and passion when the pressure lessens. Hannah provides us with a powerful example. Her praise is as passionate and intense as her praying when she was so burdened. The same must be true in our lives.

Depending on God is not simply committing your burdens and concerns to Him. It is also a matter of acknowledging His goodness and His faithfulness to answer you. It is the realization that God and only God could have answered. Out of that, you offer sincere and passionate praise and thanks for what He has done.

Practical Steps For Developing Dependence On God

Depending on God is a characteristic that you develop over time. It is the work of a lifetime. It is essential that you strive to develop this dependence because of the natural tendency to self-sufficiency and self-righteousness.

The following are some suggestions to help you develop this dependence. These suggestions are offered to help you grow in your ability to depend on God.

- ◆ *Ask God to show you your condition before Him (Luke 18:13).* Dependence on God flows out of realizing your sinfulness and insufficiency. You will depend on God as you see the need to depend on Him. As you grow in your understanding of how much you need God and how unworthy you are before God, it will create in you an ever-deepening sense of reliance on God.
- ◆ *Pray that God would reveal Himself to you.* Ask God to show you how sufficient He is. I am sure that all Christians would confess that God is great and powerful. Yet, you must have

more than an intellectual assent to this; you must have this as the conviction of your heart. Pray that God would give you fresh and profound insight into His greatness and sufficiency.

- ◆ *Plead for a growing humility before your Father.* Humility and dependence go hand-in-hand. The greater your humility before God, the greater your dependence on God. **1 Peter 5:7** does tell us to cast all our cares on the Father. Yet, it is important to notice its connection to **1 Peter 5:6**, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” Casting all your cares on the Father is connected to humbling yourself under His mighty hand. When you humble yourself, recognizing your need of God and His power, you are then willing to depend on Him. Pray for the humility that will lead to dependence.
- ◆ *Ask Him to help you deal with any unhealthy dependence on others.* God gives us family, friends, and spiritual leaders who can help us and encourage us. He gives us our brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet, if we are not careful, we can allow these relationships to take a priority over our relationship with God. We can depend more on people than on God. Our focus may be more on people than on God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to search you in this matter. Ask Him to reveal any unhealthy dependence that you may have. Plead for the grace and the strength to deal with it.
- ◆ *Strive to have an ongoing conversation with God.* As a believer, you need to have set times of prayer. Some call this a “quiet time”. This is something that every believer should make a part of his or her life. Yet, prayer cannot and should not be confined to just one part of your day. Prayer should permeate every part of your life. You should pray throughout the day. Keep the lines of communication open between God and you. Talk to Him about anything and everything.
- ◆ *Labor to commit everything in your life to the Lord.* This suggestion is closely related to the

last one. During your ongoing conversation with God, commit everything in your life to God. When you get out of bed, commit your day to Him, asking for His help in that day. When you see your spouse or your children in the morning, commit them into God’s hands, asking for His help in dealing with them. Before you drive to work, ask for God’s help and protection. I could go on and on. The key issue is to confess continually your need of God and asking for His help. I realize that this can be turned into a dead routine, a legalistic trap. Yet, it does take discipline to do this, especially in light of our pride and self-sufficiency. Do not view this as something that you have to do. View it as an opportunity to tell God how much you love Him, how much you need Him, and how you cannot make it without Him.

- ◆ *Pray for the Holy Spirit to search you with the following question: What areas of my life do I strive to control without depending on You?* By doing this, you are targeting the problem areas. You are striving to deal with those areas that you refuse to surrender or are having trouble surrendering. Plead with the Holy Spirit to show you the areas that your Father wants you to surrender.
- ◆ *Study, memorize, and meditate on verses concerning God’s faithfulness.* As you grow in your understanding of God’s faithfulness, it should create within you a desire to depend on Him. It should give you the conviction that you can depend on Him. If you are struggling to trust and depend on your Father, the Holy Spirit can use these verses to help you deal with this. Some verses that you can use are **Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 7:9, 32:8; 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Kings 8:56; 2 Chronicles 6:15; Psalm 25:10, 33:4, 36:5, 57:3, 86:15, 100:5, 115:1, 138:8, 146:6; Isaiah 25:1; Lamentations 3:22; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:23; 1 John 1:9.**
- ◆ *Consider and meditate on the truth that God is your Father.* The truth that God is your Father impacts your life in a variety of ways. One of

the ways it should affect you is to show you how much you must depend on Him. God is your Father through your faith in Jesus Christ. You are as dependent on Him as a child is dependent on its parent. And, you will never grow out of this dependence. Consider and meditate on the fact that God is your Father. Think about how much you need Him. A good exercise is to read **Matthew 6**. As you read this chapter, mark the references to your Father. Compile a list of what your Father does and how much you need Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you study and meditate on this truth. Pray that He will burn this truth into your heart.

- ◆ *Ask Him to teach you how to depend on Him.* Plead with Your Father to teach you how to rely on Him. Confess your need of Him. This will please your Father and will move Him to draw you into a more intimate and trusting relationship.

When Your Church Is NOT A House of Prayer

In **Isaiah 56:7**, God tells His prophet, "For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." Jesus reaffirmed this when He drove the money changers from the Temple, "Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations*'" (**Mark 11:17**). The Father said and the Son affirmed that the church is to be characterized by prayer. It is intended primarily to be a place where prayer is preeminent. The priority of prayer among God's people is given powerful emphasis in the Old Testament and is then affirmed in the New Testament.

You know this truth. You long for it to be true in your church. Yet, it is not. Your church is not a "house of prayer." The members of your church are too overwhelmed by plans and programs to pray. They are far too busy to pull aside and cry out to God. The focus of your church is activity and not prayer. Superficial prayers begin Bible study classes and business meetings. Brief, cliché-laden prayers open and close the services.

There are a variety of reasons why the church is in this shape. Yet, your focus cannot be on how your church got in this shape. You must now ask yourself, "How do we get out of this mess?" What do you do when your church is not a house of prayer? How do you, who loves prayer and wants it to be the priority of your church, respond when the church does not give prayer its preeminent place? The following are some suggestions on what you can do.

- ◆ **Do not give up.** If you have a heart for prayer, do not give up the struggle of leading your church to prayer. Do not let the current lack of interest discourage you. Keep praying and do not let frustration and discouragement lead you to quit. The only cure for prayerlessness is prayer. Dynamic prayer ministries often begin in churches with one or two people who persevered in prayer.
- ◆ **Do not expect a prayer ministry to grow quickly and dramatically.** A heart for prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. It is often a process. A prayer ministry is usually built one person at a time. God will add to the ranks of prayer warriors one believer at a time.
- ◆ **Ask God to raise up pray-ers.** Plead with God to burden people concerning prayer. Ask Him to convict them about the necessity of prayer. Call on Him to draw believers into a deeper intimacy with Him. Before long, God will honor your prayers and send believers into the prayer ministry who have a heart and a burden for prayer.
- ◆ **Pray that the Holy Spirit would release a spirit of prayer in the church.** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. He is the One who initiates and empowers the believer to pray. Call on Him to stir the believers to a new recognition of prayer's necessity. Plead with Him to release fresh power into the believers' lives so that they will be moved to pray. Pray that the Holy Spirit will do whatever it takes to bring your church to its knees.

- ◆ **Pray that the leaders of your church will be convicted concerning prayer and a prayer ministry.** Ask God to burden their hearts concerning this crucial matter. Plead with God to give them a vision of transforming the church into a house of prayer.
- ◆ **Pray in agreement with believers from other churches.** If you feel alone in your struggle to grow or guide a prayer ministry, find other believers who have a heart for prayer. Share your burden with them. Pray with them and ask them to pray for you.

- ◆ **Do not worry about being thought of as a fanatic.** It is unfortunate, but true. Those who do not pray often do not like those who do. The believer who has a heart for prayer is sometimes seen as an oddity rather than an asset in the church. Do not worry about those who will criticize you or think of you as a fanatic or an oddity. God will honor the man or woman who pulls aside and spends time with Him. Pray and strive to build the prayer ministry. God will not forget your labor of love. Always remember 1 **Corinthians 15:58**, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."



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