



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

Equipping & Encouraging Believers  
In Prayer

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## PRAYING IN FAITH

The most important attitude you bring to prayer is the attitude of faith. Faith is the basis of your relationship to God, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (**Hebrews 11:6**). The only way that you can approach God is by believing that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. True prayer cannot take place without faith. Without faith, praying is an empty religious ritual that does not reach or move God and does not affect anything or anybody.

Jesus is your great Example and Teacher concerning prayer. He makes clear the necessity of faith for prayer, "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (**Matthew 21:22**). Jesus is confronting you with the truth that you must believe God if you are to pray to Him. Faith is indispensable to true prayer. It is that essential element that you must have and cultivate if you are to grow in your ability to seek Him and to receive from Him.

Does faith characterize your praying? When you pray, what is your attitude toward God? The most basic lesson of prayer is that you must have an attitude of faith toward God when you pray. You must believe that God hears and that God answers. There is no substitute for this truth. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him or to pray to Him. Yet, through faith, you can seek Him and experience Him in fresh and dynamic ways along with receiving from Him.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will examine what it means to pray in faith. Since faith is vital to prayer, it is crucial that you develop a biblical understanding of praying in faith. We will also examine unbelief in prayer and how to face and contend with this enemy of prayer. We will also look at persevering in faith even though the answer does not come right away. It is my hope and earnest plea that your faith will increase as you read and work through this issue. My prayer is that you will develop a tenacious faith that clings to God and His Word and that receives from Him.

### What Does It Mean To Pray In Faith?

The Bible reveals the necessity of praying in faith. Yet, what does this mean for you on a personal level? How does this apply to you on a daily basis? *When you pray in faith, you recognize God's authority and power to answer.* Praying in faith means that you believe that God possesses the authority and the power to answer you. It is the deep and abiding conviction that God can perform what I ask of Him.

When you pray, the focus should not be on you. It must be on God. Prayer is looking to God—His authority and power. Our eyes must be fixed on God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you can ask or think (**Ephesians 3:20**). The attitude that God wants to

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produce in you is summed up in **Psalm 123:2**, "Behold as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD God, until He has mercy on us." He longs for you to look at His power and authority. He desires that you trust Him to hear and answer you through His glorious sovereignty.

Too many times believers lack faith in prayer because they are looking at their requests. Their gaze is fixed on the size or the impossibility of the requests. You will sink into doubt and despair if your focus is fastened on what you are seeking God about. You must turn your eyes of faith to the power and the authority of God. God has the power and authority to hear you and answer you regardless of your request. This is the place that God wants you to be at in your prayer life—fixing your gaze on Him, trusting His power and authority.

Praying in faith means daily adjusting your focus—looking to the power and authority of God. It is bringing yourself back time and time again to the truth that God has the power and authority to hear you and answer you. When you pray in faith, you are confident that God can hear and answer you regardless of what you are praying about.

*When you pray in faith, you ask of God without doubting.* When you come before God, you must not doubt in your heart concerning your request. You must not waver in believing that God will answer you. God does not want you to doubt, but to believe Him when you ask of Him. The Word of God declares in **James 1:6**, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driving and tossed by the wind." When you ask of God, He longs for you to trust Him with no doubting concerning His willingness or His power to answer.

How does God view the person who prays but doubts? He compares that person to the waves of the sea, which are driven and tossed by the wind. It describes a person who prays but wavers in faith because of feelings, circumstances, people, or inadequacies. When you pray and doubt God, God sees you as a wave of the sea—driven and tossed by doubt. Does that describe your prayer life? Are you like the waves of the sea—driven and tossed by doubt, fear, and unbelief even though you are praying?

The good news is that you serve a merciful, forgiving God. He will forgive you of your doubting. God wants to deliver you from being unstable in prayer. It is not His will for you to waver between faith and doubt. God longs to bring you to the place in your prayer life where you do not give room to doubt.

In my personal prayer life, I have struggled with doubt. My heart has felt the sting of the Spirit's conviction after I have pled with God and then doubted whether or not God would answer. As I prayed one day, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart with the question, "Why ask if you are going to doubt?" God has the power and the authority. He has promised to hear and answer. My heart was filled with remorse. I sought God's forgiveness and committed to seek Him in faith and with no doubting. I promised to enter His presence from that moment on with a holy seriousness. If I was going to ask, I was going to mean business with God. There are still battles with doubt. Yet, God has been teaching me to enter with a holy seriousness. He is ready and willing to hear and answer. The question is "Am I ready to ask and believe Him?"

Your loving Father desires to create a holy seriousness in you. He wants to remove the doubt that will plague your prayers. His heart beats for you to enter His presence in faith, asking of Him, ready to receive from Him. This is what praying in faith is all about—asking without giving room for doubt.

*When you pray in faith, you are committed to your prayer request.* Praying in faith means seeking God with persistence concerning your request. When you pray in faith, you don't give up. You may change your request under the Holy Spirit's direction. You may release it if it is contrary to the good and holy will of your loving Father. But, you don't quit. You don't stop praying because you don't see any answer or because you don't think you are getting anywhere. Let God be the judge of when and why you should change or release a request. Praying in faith simply does not abandon a request because of feelings or circumstances.

It is the will of God for you to persevere in prayer. The Word of God declares in **Luke 18:1**, "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." This is not only a

revelation of the Father's will, it is also an encouragement from your Father. I have turned to this verse on many, many occasions. Sometimes I have wanted to give up praying for someone or some request. Sometimes I had grown weary of praying. Sometimes I just didn't feel that I had the heart to keep praying. When I turned to this verse, the Holy Spirit would always seem to magnify that last phrase, "AND NOT LOSE HEART." It is not your Father's will for you to quit praying. The heart of your Father is stirred when you don't give up—when you don't quit. When you don't lose heart, it touches His heart.

Prayer is not for the faint of heart! It is for those who will not give up—who will not quit. God's richest answers and mightiest works are for those who will not abandon seeking Him. The Holy Spirit moved me to write in the margin next to **Luke 18:1** the following reference—**Galatians 6:9**, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do NOT LOSE HEART." If you do not lose heart, you will reap a harvest of answers. God will honor the heart that will not give up, that will not quit. He will hear and He will answer if you do not give up. Praying in faith means commitment to your request.

*When you pray in faith, you hold God to His Word.* God has filled His Word with precious and powerful promises. His Word is packed with principles and truths about Him and His ways. Praying in faith uses these promises, principles, and truths to plead with God. It is entering His presence asking Him to be faithful to His Word.

God loves His Word. He will be faithful to His Word. He will not fail to do what He has promised. This is why holding God to His Word is crucial. When you present God's Word to Him and call on Him to be faithful to that Word, it moves and touches His heart. He will respond. He has promised to respond, "For I am watching over My word to perform it" (**Jeremiah 1:12**, NASB).

Holding God to His Word is zeroing in on the faithfulness of God. The Word of God reveals that God is faithful; He always does what He says. He will not be untrue concerning anything that He has promised. God cannot deny Himself; He must be faithful. Listen to the testimony of His Word:

"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven; Your faithfulness endures to all generations" (**Psalm 119:89-90**).

"Great is Your faithfulness" (**Lamentations 3:23**).

"For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (**2 Corinthians 1:20**).

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some count slackness" (**2 Peter 3:9**).

Holding God to His Word means asking God to be faithful to what He has declared in His Word. It is pleading with God to respond because of His great faithfulness.

A biblical example of holding God to His Word is found in **Nehemiah 1**. In this chapter, Nehemiah is praying about the restoration of Jerusalem. He says to God, "Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens; yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for my name'" (**Nehemiah 1:9**).

In **Leviticus 26:33**, God had promised to judge and scatter the people of Israel if they were disobedient to Him. Nehemiah confesses their disobedience and declares that God has been faithful to that promise (**Nehemiah 1:6-8**). Yet, He then reminds God of His promise in **Deuteronomy 30:1-4**. In these verses, God promises to restore Israel if they will return to Him in faith and repentance. Nehemiah declares their willingness to return to the Lord. He calls on God to be faithful to His promise. He asks Him to do what He has promised. His words in **Nehemiah 1:9** are based on the truth of **Deuteronomy 30:1-4**. This is holding God to His Word. It is reminding God of His Word and pleading with Him to act. It is a characteristic of praying in faith.

*When you pray in faith, you depend on the goodness of God.* Faith lays hold of God's goodness. Faith relies on the fact that God is good and that He longs to bless and provide for His

people. The Bible describes God's goodness in this way, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (**James 1:17**).

When you pray in faith, you believe that God is good and that He desires to answer you. Faith does not view God as stingy or reluctant. Faith sees God as a loving Father who controls all things and is willing to pour out abundant blessings on His people when they seek Him. It is your Father's desire to bless you. He longs to bless you more than you desire to be blessed. Faith clings to this and is motivated by it.

God desires to reveal His goodness to you. God created you in order to show you what a great and awesome God He is. He wants to display to you His unique and glorious character. He yearns to show you the depth and richness of His goodness, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?" (**Matthew 7:11**). Your Father wants to pour out on You abundant blessing. He loves you and wants to shower You with His goodness. Yet, listen to that last phrase, "to those who ask Him." The blessings of Your good Father come only to the ones who ask of Him. Your Father is good and wants to bless. He is waiting for you to lay hold of His goodness and seek Him with a believing heart. Praying in faith depends on God's goodness and is motivated by it.

## The Wretched Sin Of Unbelief

Unbelief is the wretched sin that hinders a believer from receiving from God. The Word of God declares the one who doubts should not expect anything from God, "For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (**James 1:7-8**).

God will not bless unbelief. Unbelief is an insult to Him. It is an assault on His goodness, His grace, His power, His kindness, and His holy purpose. In no uncertain terms, He has made it clear that unbelief cuts you off from His blessing. Listen to the testimony of the Word of God:

"Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (**Matthew 13:58**).

"Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness . . . so I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'" (**Hebrews 3:8, 11**).

"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief, for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you. However this kind does not go out except prayer and fasting'" (**Matthew 17:19-21**).

The Word of God is clear: unbelief is a wretched sin that dishonors God and keeps you from receiving from God.

In the kingdom of God, you get what you believe. In the kingdom of God, no one earns or merits anything. Yet, you can ask and receive by faith due to the grace of God. The believing is the receiving. Without believing there can be no receiving from God. This is the fixed, unchanging law of God concerning prayer.

There are some basic causes of unbelief in the believer's life. They are:

- *Fearing that you are not worthy.* Many believers doubt because they do not feel worthy to receive anything from God. Their prayers are plagued with doubt because they do not feel as if God should do anything for them. The truth is no one is worthy to ask and receive of God. There is not a believer who earns or merits anything from God. You have been made worthy by the blood and righteousness of Christ. You are clothed in Christ's righteousness and cleansed by His blood. This provides you with access and boldness (**Ephesians 2:18, 3:12**).
- *Fearing that God does not want to give.* Some believers struggle with unbelief because they are afraid that God doesn't want to give to them. They do not feel as if God will hear and answer them. Yet, this goes against the testimony of Scripture. The Bible reveals that God is good, willing and ready to bless His children abundantly.

- *Fearing that their request is too great or too difficult.* Some believers struggle with unbelief because they believe their request is too much to ask for. They are afraid that God will not answer because it is great and mighty, beyond what can be thought of or imagined. Yet, it must be remembered that God is sovereign. You can't ask too much of God. In fact, God loves huge requests. You pay God a great compliment when you ask Him to do the miraculous, the extraordinary.
- *Sin weakens faith.* Unconfessed sin will weaken your faith. When you do not deal with sin, it drains away your spiritual strength. You will not have the boldness and confidence to pray in faith when you compromise with evil. Praying in faith requires that you confront, confess, and rid yourself of sin.

## A Faith-Lift For Your Faith

As we have already seen, faith is indispensable to prayer. You must pray in faith if you are to receive from God. Unbelief is a barrier to your receiving from God. Because of this, you must cultivate your faith in God for your prayer life. You need a "faith-lift." The following are some suggestions that you can use to build and strengthen your faith. They are offered as pointers that you can use or adapt for your personal prayer life.

- *Ask God to increase your faith.* The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith (**Luke 17:5**). The Word of God declares that you have not because you ask not (**James 4:2**). Plead with God to grow your faith. Call on Him to develop and strengthen your faith in Him, especially for prayer.
- *Immerse yourself in the character of God.* As you hear, read, and study the Word of God, pay attention to the character of God. Learn daily about Him. Rejoice in His character. The character of God is the foundation of faith. We can believe God because of who God is. As you grow in your understanding of who God is, it will help you grow in your ability to trust Him, "And those who know your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken

those who seek You" (**Psalm 9:10**). Ask God to reveal Himself to you in fresh and unique ways.

- *Fill your life with the Word of God.* The Word of God is the Holy Spirit's instrument for creating faith in you (**Romans 10:17**). The more you expose your life to God's Word, the deeper the Holy Spirit can work in you. As you fill your life with the Word of God, He will increase and fortify your faith.
- *Plead for the destruction of unbelief in your life.* Every believer struggles with unbelief. Every believer can confess, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (**Mark 9:24**). Yet, unbelief must be confronted. Ask God to help you overcome the unbelief in your life. Plead with the Holy Spirit to help you mortify the wretched sin.
- *Deal harshly with unbelieving thoughts.* This is closely connected to the last suggestion. When unbelieving thoughts enter your mind, do not entertain them. Do not toy with them. Force them out and declare your faith in God. You might even consider doing this verbally. Refuse any unbelieving thoughts. Stand strong with the shield of faith (**Ephesians 6:16**).
- *Stretch your faith by asking for the impossible.* In my journal, I have what I call "The Impossible Page." At the top of the page, I have recorded **Ephesians 3:20-21**, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." After this, I have recorded prayer requests that would seem impossible—things that could only be accomplished through God's powerful working. Your faith is like a muscle—it's not going to grow if you don't exercise it. This is a way of stretching and exercising your faith. On this page, you can record impossible requests and then pray over these requests, believing God to work powerfully.
- *Pray the Word of God, especially the promises of God.* Praying the Word of God builds your faith and enables you to pray with confidence. The Word of God is the revealed will of God. When you pray God's will as revealed in the Word, He hears and responds, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15). Fill your praying with the Word of God. Saturate your petitions with His promises. God will hear, bless, and honor the prayers that are permeated with His Word.

- *Keep a record of your prayer requests.* Praying in faith means keeping a record of your requests. It will help you stay focused in your praying. It will also enable you to see how God has worked in the past.
- *Seek out an intercessor that will pray for your growth in faith.* Find a prayer partner or someone who will pray about this particular area for you. Share with that person your desire to grow in faith and to deal with the unbelief in your life. Ask this person to pray for your growth in faith. Have this person ask you about your prayer life and your faith concerning those things that you are praying over. It is essential to have someone pray for you and encourage you concerning this area, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is called, 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13).
- *Pray that your church will develop an atmosphere of faith.* Ask the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in your church, bringing the believers to a more intimate, stronger faith in God. It is only in the atmosphere of faith that your own faith will have the room to grow and expand.

## Praying For Faith

In my prayer journal, I have a page with Scripture prayers for faith. The following Scripture prayers are offered to help you plead with God for yourself and your church concerning this issue.

Father, grant me greater faith in You. I plead that, in whatever things I ask of You in prayer, I would believe You and receive from You (Matthew 21:22).

Father, enable me to ask of You without doubting. I confess that I will not receive anything from You if I doubt. Grant me the grace and power to ask, believe, and receive from You (James 1:5-6).

Father, I believe but I am filled with unbelief. O God, help my unbelief. Empower me to confront the pockets of unbelief in my life. Cause me to hate unbelief and to overcome it through the Word of God and the power of the Spirit (Mark 9:24).

Father, I ask You to reveal Yourself to me in fresh and new ways. Open my eyes to see Your character from Your Word. Let Your character bolster, deepen, and invigorate my faith in You (Psalm 9:10).

Father, create within me the faith that can ask and receive from You exceedingly abundantly above my conceptions of You and what You can do. Reveal to me what You can do as I ask and believe You (Ephesians 3:20).

Father, enable me to get my eyes off of my situation and myself. Help me to focus on You and what You can do. I depend on You. I believe You. Teach me to ask in faith with no wavering on my part (1 Peter 5:6).

## When The Answer Is Delayed

You have prayed. You have made your petition known to God. You believe Him for your request. Yet, there is no answer. You have not received what you asked of God. What do you do when the answer is delayed?

The Bible tells us of a couple that experienced a delay in receiving an answer from God. That couple is Zacharias and Elizabeth. The Word of God reveals that this couple did not have a child, "But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years" (Luke 1:7).

Zacharias and Elizabeth prayed for a child. They sought God with all their heart. This couple knew God and walked in obedience to Him, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord

blameless" (**Luke 1:6**). They asked God for a child but they did not receive an answer.

But, God answered in His time! The Word of God says that an angel appeared to Zacharias and said, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John " (**Luke 1:13**). The answer, though delayed, did come. There was a gap of many years between the time that he began asking of God and the revelation of the answer. Even though much time had passed, God was faithful to answer the believing prayer of His servants Zacharias and Elizabeth.

How do you respond when the answer is delayed? The following are some practical steps you might consider taking when you do not receive an answer from the Lord.

- (1) *Don't give up!* Persevere in prayer. Do not yield to unbelief. Keep on asking, seeking, and knocking (**Matthew 7:7**). Continue crying out to God; don't let up. Give God no relief!
- (2) *Rejoice in God.* Adore God. Confess your sin to Him. Give thanks to Him continually. Listen for His voice. Rest in Him and glory in His character. When the answer is delayed, let it drive you into a more intimate relationship with God. God is the greatest treasure, the richest blessing that one can ever receive. Never lose sight of this truth. As precious and wonderful as your request may be, it can never match the glory, the wonder, or the excellence of knowing and loving God.
- (3) *Be faithful to serve God.* Zacharias and Elizabeth continued to serve God even though the answer was delayed. Continue to serve the Lord faithfully in spite of delayed answers. Don't condition your service to God on the basis of the answers that you receive or that you don't receive. Serve Him faithfully because He is worthy.
- (4) *Don't allow bitterness or resentment toward God to gain a foothold in your life.* Even though the answer was delayed, the Bible reveals that Zacharias and Elizabeth walked before God in holiness and righteousness. They did not give any room to bitterness or resentment. Immediately confess and repent of these sinful emotions. Ask God to help you overcome them rather than yield to them.

- (5) *Ask God to give you wisdom.* Plead with Him to grant you the wisdom that you need to deal with this delay. Pray that you will know how to respond to the delay in a way that honors Him and will mature you.

## Covering The Badge With Prayer

Your law enforcement officials have a difficult and demanding task. They have the responsibility of enforcing the law, protecting the public, and apprehending those who break the law. For this reason, you need to cover them in prayer.

The following prayer guide can help you pray for your law enforcement officials. You can do this as an individual believer. Yet, churches need to consider having this as a special emphasis or an ongoing prayer ministry. The key issue is to intercede for those who are ordained by God for enforcing the law. Get to know your law enforcement officials. Cover their lives and jobs with fervent, believing prayer.

- ◆ *Pray for the salvation and spiritual growth of every law official (**John 3:16, 6:44; 1 Peter 2:1-3**).* Call on God to meet the spiritual needs of your law officials. Ask that they would know God personally and have a heart to know and obey His Word.
- ◆ *Plead that God would grant His protection to them (**2 Samuel 22:4**).* Your law officials have a dangerous job. Their lives are on the line each day. Pray that God will place His protection around their lives and the lives of their families.
- ◆ *Ask that they will be provided with all that they need to carry out their job (**Philippians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 9:8**).* Pray that they will have the funds, the equipment, the opportunities, and the courage that they need to carry out their responsibility.
- ◆ *Plead that God will give them the wisdom and the insight that they need (**Proverbs 2:6**).* Call on God to grant them wisdom and insight for enforcing the law and pursuing and arresting criminals.

- ◆ *Ask God to deliver them from corruption in any form (1 Corinthians 10:13).* Pray that they will not yield themselves to any corruption. Ask God to grant them a way of escape when they are put in this position.
- ◆ *Call on God to enable them to maintain order and to capture and imprison those who commit crimes (1 Peter 2:14; Romans 13:1-5).* This is the God-ordained purpose of law enforcement officials. Ask God to help them do these things wisely and efficiently.
- ◆ *Plead for the destruction of the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs (Psalm 139:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).* One of the most pressing problems that law enforcement officials face is the drug problem. They are in a constant struggle to put an end to this evil. Cry out to God, pleading that He will do whatever He must to destroy this crime. It is a crime that plagues the whole of society. It destroys the bodies made in the image of God. Ask God to

grant them success in putting an end to the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs. Plead with God to work in miraculous ways to stop these malicious and pernicious crimes.

- ◆ *Pray that God will bring to light whatever is needed to bring criminals to justice (Numbers 32:23).* Plead that God would work in miraculous ways to expose criminals and what they have done. Ask that those who commit crimes will slip up and make mistakes—mistakes that will enable the law officials to gather proof and arrest them. Pray that what they have done will be brought to light where they can be prosecuted.
- ◆ *Ask God to restore true justice in our court system (Psalm 7:9, 58:11, 92:15).* God is the righteous Judge. He loves truth and justice. Call on Him to restore truth and justice to the court system. Ask Him to enable the law enforcement officials and the court system to work together to ensure true justice and order.



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