



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Equipping & Encouraging Believers
In Prayer

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GOD-CENTERED PRAYER

At a recent conference, a mother shared with me that she had started working at the school where her children attended. Now that the kids were older, she desired to work outside of the home. And she also wanted to be near her kids. They were rapidly moving toward graduation and leaving home for college. She believed that this would be a good experience for her children and her.

She soon found out that this was not the case. As she walked down the hall one day, she saw her son and his friends. She went up and said, "Hi, honey. How's your day going?" The mother said that her teenage son looked like he was going to die. The red-faced son sighed deeply and announced to the group, "Everybody, this is my mom." The mother lamented that the only time that her kids wanted to see her at school was when they needed money or the keys to the car. She was greeted only with "Gimme this" or "Gimme that."

As I thought about this woman's story, it seems apparent to me that this is often the way that we respond to God. Think about it. When do we get serious about prayer? It's usually when there is a need. We're burdened. We have desperate circumstances. It seems that our praying is characterized by "Gimme this" or Gimme that."

This happens because our praying is man-centered. It is focused on us—what we want, what we need, what we feel. God does long for you to make requests (**Matthew 7:7-11**). God does desire for you to bring your burdens to Him (**1 Peter 5:7**). Yet, He also desires that you become more God-centered in your praying. He yearns to be the focus,

the priority, of your prayer life. He never wants your requests to become more important than Him. He wants you to find in Him the answers to all your needs and situations.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* is devoted to developing a God-centered prayer life. This newsletter will offer practical suggestions to help you do this. As you begin this new year, I pray that you will commit yourself to pursuing a God-centered prayer life.

What Is A God-Centered Prayer Life?

A God-centered prayer life focuses on God. It is a prayer life that makes God's glory, God's will, and God's kingdom preeminent. It is built on the truth that prayer is a relationship with God—a relationship in which the believer seeks God, depends on God, and surrenders to God. The God-centered prayer life is characterized by commitment to seek God.

In contrast, the man-centered prayer life focuses on self. It is a prayer life that makes my glory, my will, and my needs preeminent. It is built on the belief that God exists for me—that God exists to bless me, help me, and do whatever I want. The man-centered prayer life is characterized by convenience. I seek God when it is convenient for me.

The main difference between God-centered and man-centered praying is one of perspective.

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It's all about how you approach God. The God-centered prayer life approaches God and says, "How should I pray about this need, this person, or this situation in light of God's will, His glory, and His kingdom?" The man-centered prayer life approaches God and says, "This is what I want; this is what I would like to see; this is what I need."

For most believers, their prayer lives are a mixture of both these. Sometimes our praying is more God-centered than self-centered. Sometimes the opposite is true. Yet, the key is to grow out of self-centered praying into prayer that is focused on God—His will, His glory, and His kingdom. The believer must seek to bring all his or her requests and burdens to God and pray in the light of God's glory, will, and kingdom.

Why Should I Pursue A God-Centered Prayer Life?

Why should a believer seek to be God-centered in prayer? *First, Jesus teaches us to pray this way.* In the Model Prayer, Jesus declares, "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). The will, glory, and kingdom of our Father and God are to be the guiding principles of prayer. They are to be preeminent. In all of our praying, these must be our focus. In all of our asking and pleading, we must seek to align our requests with His will, glory, and kingdom. This makes prayer God-centered. It also provides us with great power and delight in prayer. When your praying is in agreement with His will, glory, and kingdom, you will see the impossible become the possible, the incredible a living reality.

Second, God is worthy. Your God is the living Lord of time and eternity. He is the one true and living God. No one and nothing can compare to Him. Nothing can match His excellent greatness. He is worthy of being the focus of your praying. He is worthy of the preeminence in your praying.

Next, God's character should lead to God-centered praying. God is not a vending machine or a genie that exists solely to bless you and perform for you. He is a loving Father who wants an authentic relationship with You. He longs to change you. He yearns to use You in His kingdom.

He desires to teach you how to communicate with Him and pray according to His will, glory, and kingdom. These things are due to His character. He is a personal, loving, faithful God. Self-centered praying focuses only on self. It is not concerned with God's character that longs to be in relationship with You, changing you and using you. The character of your Father should move you to make Him the priority of your praying.

Your need should stir you to be God-centered in your praying. What is your greatest need? Your greatest need is God. The psalmist reveals this by declaring, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:25-26). You are the creature; He is the Creator. You are finite, weak, and sinful; He is infinite, omnipotent, and holy. You must depend on God. God's will, glory, and kingdom are for Your best interests. When you are living for God's will, glory, and kingdom, you are experiencing the very best that this infinite, omnipotent, and holy God can purpose. When God is the focus of your praying, you will find Him sufficient for all the needs of your life.

God-centered praying builds faith. When you focus on God in your praying, it will build your faith. Looking at His greatness encourages and strengthens your faith. Yet, when you focus on people, needs, or situations, it will begin weakening your faith. You can't fix your focus on people, needs, or situations and expect to have the faith and boldness to intercede concerning these things. You must look to God. You must seek for His will, glory, and kingdom.

In my personal prayer life, I have found that I struggle the most when my focus is on everything but God. When I am looking only at people, needs, and situations, I find that it drains and weakens my faith. It creates a situation where I feel hopeless and don't have the faith or boldness to pray with power and effectiveness. When I start asking "Why?" I find my heart sinking and my faith weakening.

Yet, when I focus on God, I find that my faith grows. When I get my eyes off of what I can see and look to the living God, it encourages and strengthens my faith and boldness to pray. I have found that the best question to ask is not "Why?" but "What?" My praying has been transformed by

asking questions like “What is Your will?” “What will bring You glory?” or “What is going to advance Your kingdom in this situation?” As my focus returns to God, it increases my faith to pray with power and boldness.

Finally, God-centered prayer protects you against disillusionment with prayer. I encounter people on a continual basis who are disillusioned with prayer. They don’t pray because they don’t believe that it “works.” At some time, they prayed and did not get what they requested or God didn’t work things out like they felt that He should. For this reason, they don’t see any need to pray. This is unfortunate. Yet, it is the result of man-centered praying.

If you’re praying is self-centered, you will grow disillusioned with prayer. This is because prayer is a relationship with God. It’s about a relationship in which you speak to Him and He speaks to you. It’s not about getting God to do what you want or getting Him to “fix” the situations in your life. Prayer is a relationship in which you get to know God and align your life and desires with His will, glory, and kingdom. As you do this, you will experience power and delight in prayer. God-centered praying protects you against disillusionment with prayer.

How Can I Develop A God-Centered Prayer Life?

There is no formula for developing a God-centered prayer life. There is no simple series of steps; it’s about developing a relationship to God. It is cultivating a relationship in which you become passionate for God—His will, glory, and kingdom.

The following are some suggestions on how to develop a God-centered prayer life. It is only through God’s power and help that you can deal with your self-centeredness and grow in your passion for God.

- *Ask God to purify your understanding of Him.* The Word of God commands that we are to have no other gods and that we are not to make gods for ourselves (Exodus 20:2-7). These two commands reveal our tendency to develop false ideas about God. Our lives can be cluttered with misconceptions and deceptions about the true nature of our God. Plead that your belief

about God will be purified. Ask that you will know God as He is.

- *Pray that your desires will become His desires.* Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to desire what the Father desires. The Holy Spirit knows the desires of the Father. Plead with Him to produce those desires in you by His own powerful working. Call on Him to produce in you the ability to desire what God wants in all circumstances.
- *Plead that you will root out all self-centeredness.* Unfortunately, self-centeredness is a deeply rooted sin in our being. It can manifest itself in your life in powerful and cunning ways. Call on the Holy Spirit to help you root it out of your life. Pray that you will be able to remove it from the depth of your being.
- *Pray for a heart for His glory.* Ask that you will have a heart for God’s glory in all things, especially in your prayer life. Pray that the Holy Spirit will create within you the hunger to see God glorified. At the same time, pray that you will not be preoccupied with your own glory. Ask that you will not desire the praise and recognition of others.
- *Ask for a more personal understanding and experience of His love.* Self-centeredness melts in the light of God’s love. As you understand and experience more of God’s love, you will cling less and less to self-centered plans and desires. The overflowing, unconditional love of God breaks through selfishness and brings a person to seek and focus on God. Plead for a deeper understanding and experience of His love.

The following Scripture prayers will help you to put the preceding principles into action. I would encourage and challenge you to pray the following prayers every day for the next year. You can pray one a day, a combination each day, or all of them each day. But, consider pleading these truths for you and your prayer life.

WARNING: THE FOLLOWING PRAYERS CAN CHANGE YOU AND YOUR PRAYER LIFE FOREVER.

Father, I need You. I pray that You would purify my understanding of You. By the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, remove from my mind and heart any misconceptions or deceptions concerning You. Reveal Yourself to me. Cause me to know You as You are (**Exodus 20:2-7**).

Father, I need You. Your Word says to delight myself in You and You will give me the desires of my heart. Enable me to delight in You. Create Your desires in me. I ask that my heart would long for what You love and desire. Holy Spirit, work in me so that when I desire something, it will be what my Father desires (**Psalms 37:4**).

Father, I need You. Enable me to root out the self-centeredness in my life. Help me to rip it out of the depths of my being. I pray that I would not love my life and selfishly cling to it. I ask that I would be willing to surrender it to You daily. Make me sensitive to self-centeredness in my life, especially when I pray. I plead that my praying would not be self-centered but God-centered (**James 4:2**).

Father, I need You. Not unto me, O Lord, but to You belongs all glory. I praise Your name. Father, grant me a heart for Your glory. I ask that my heart would beat to bring glory to You in all things. Teach me to pray for those things that will glorify You. Deliver me from being preoccupied with my own glory and honor. Let my life, especially my prayer life, glorify Your name. Amen (**Psalms 115:1-3**).

The "ABC" Prayer

In my struggle to move toward a more God-centered prayer life, I have developed a prayer that I pray daily. I start each day with this prayer. And, I use it before my prayer times in order to help me get prepared to seek the Father. You can use this or develop your own from it. The key issue is to pray for the removal of anything that will keep you from focusing on God—His will, glory, and kingdom. Each petition in the prayer is based on the letters "ABC".

Accept my life. The beginning of this prayer is a reminder that I have been bought with a price. It is a time to reaffirm the commitment of my life to

Him. Declare to God that your life is not Your own but that it belongs to Him and Him alone.

Break my will. Since I belong to God, I am to do His will. I am to strive to do and pray His will. Yet, my stubborn will is slow to respond to His will. I pray for the merciful but powerful breaking of God's will before that day or that prayer time.

Crucify my desires. Ask God to crucify any desires that you have that are not His desires. Our desires can often get in the way of desiring and praying for what God longs to do.

Conform me to Your will. Now that I have surrendered myself to Him, asked Him to break my will and crucify my desires, I am now ready to pray for my life and prayer requests to be conformed to what He desires. Plead that your life and praying will be conformed to His holy purpose.

Praying For Area Churches

~~Does your church pray for the other~~ churches in your area? In a recent prayer seminar, I mentioned the need for a church to pray for surrounding churches. After that session, a member of the church came to me and said, "What happens if we pray for these other churches and they begin to win people to Jesus and grow larger than us? How will that help our church?"

At least this church member was honest. Some churches have no concern for anyone outside their own four walls. And it is unfortunate that we view other churches as competitors rather than co-laborers for Jesus and the kingdom of God. Our concern must be for more than just our own church; we must open our eyes and see our part with other churches in the Kingdom work. Do you remember the theme of this issue—God-centered or self-centered? We must lift our eyes up and see what God is doing around us and pray fervently for the work of **God's kingdom!**

I would encourage you to pray for the surrounding churches. God will honor your personal intercession for your other brothers and sisters in Christ. You might consider having a list of these in your prayer room or giving a list to all that are involved in your prayer ministry. In a

church that I served, we adopted an area church for a month. For that month we specifically for that church. However you choose to do it, God will bless it and make an eternal difference in the believers and their ministry.

The following is a prayer guide that you can use to pray for the churches in your area. It is based on **1 Thessalonians 1**. You can use this prayer guide or develop your own prayer guide from it. Consider spending time in silence before the Lord, asking Him to show you particular requests that you need to make for the churches your area. Combine Scriptural requests with insights that the Holy Spirit gives you.

Father, I pray that You would release Your grace and power into _____ Church. This church belongs to You; sustain and provide for her (1:1).

Father, I thank You for _____ Church. I pray that the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in Jesus would characterize this body of believers (1:2-3).

Father, I ask You to continue Your work of grace in the believers of _____ Church. You began the work. I plead that Your power, Your Holy Spirit, and Your assurance would fill their lives and mold them according to Your purpose (1:4-5).

Father, I plead that the believers of _____ Church would follow Christ and their spiritual leaders (1:6).

Father, I pray that the believers of _____ Church would hear and obey the Word of God no matter what their circumstances are. I ask that they would experience the joy of the Holy Spirit (1:6).

I ask that the believers of _____ Church would be examples of following Jesus (1:7).

Father, empower _____ to declare the good news of Jesus boldly and clearly. Cause them to share the gospel in every place. I pray that their faith in Jesus would be known everywhere. Transform lives through their witness (1:8-9).

I pray that the believers of _____ Church would wait with patience and expectation for the

return of Jesus. Enable them to look for and prepare for Christ's return (1:10).

Salt And Light Praying™

The Word of God says, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:13-15).

The purpose of salt is to preserve. It is to hinder corruption. The purpose of light is to scatter darkness. Light drives out the darkness. When Jesus declares that His people are salt and light, He is teaching that we are to transform society. He is saying that we are to influence lives and situations through our faith in Him. We are to hinder corruption in our world and scatter the darkness of sin and depravity.

Many Christians feel helpless in this matter. It appears that there is little that Christians can do to make a difference. However, this is a lie from the pit of hell. It is the devil that wants Christians to believe that they cannot have powerful influence in the world. He would love nothing more than for believers to forsake their responsibility to be salt and light.

You can be an agent of change in this world. You can help establish righteousness around you. You can do this through prayer. Prayer is the first crucial step to genuine change in this world. We must take a stand. We must carry out actions that will be used of God to bring change. However, we must pray first and foremost.

Believers must understand that prayer has many dimensions. It is our communication with God. It is our time alone with God. It is cultivating intimacy with God. Prayer has a definite quiet and contemplative aspect. Yet, prayer is also a tool for the transformation of lives and situations. It releases God's power into lives and situations. You can pray about the issues of the day and expect God to work and create change and righteousness in those situations.

Salt and Light Praying™ is interceding about the issues and concerns of the day. It is pleading with God to bring down what is evil and

produce righteousness in its place. In this issue, we will focus on the evil of drug abuse and trafficking. Your praying can make a difference concerning this issue.

The following prayer guide can help you intercede concerning this issue in your area. Plead the word of God concerning this issue. Keep up with what is going on concerning this issue. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight for prayer from the Word and the news.

Father, Your Word declares that You hate drug abuse and trafficking. You state that it is one of the works of the flesh. You announce that those who practice it cannot inherit the kingdom of God. O God, by Your wisdom and power, bring an end to this evil. Do what you must to end drug abuse and trafficking (**Galatians 5:20**, "sorcery").

Father, I ask You to bind the enemy's use of drugs to wound and destroy. He is a murderer and longs to destroy lives, marriages, and families through drugs. I pray in the name of Jesus that You would hinder and destroy his work (**1 John 3:8**).

Father, I plead that You would enable people to say "No!" to drugs. I pray that You would open their eyes to see the danger and destruction involved with illegal substances. I ask that they would flee from drugs (**Proverbs 1:10-18; 1 Timothy 6:11**).

Father, I plead that You would deliver every person in this area who is bound by drugs. Show them that they are enslaved and are destroying themselves. Deal with whatever is motivating them to use drugs. I pray that they will cry out to Jesus, the only Savior and Deliverer. O God, have mercy on them (**Acts 10:38; Romans 11:26**).

Father, I plead that You would grant wisdom and strength to those who are fighting the war against drugs. I ask that You would provide them everything that they need to put an end to this evil. They are Your ordained instruments for dealing with those who practice evil. Those who finance, those who make, those who distribute drugs are practicing evil. Enable the authorities to arrest and punish all those who practice this abominable evil (**Romans 13:4**).

Father, I ask for You to bring down all those who have a part in the drug industry. By Your power and anger, judge them and put an end to their evil. The Word of God says that You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness. The Word also says that You abhor the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. Those involved in the drug industry are practicing wickedness and are bloodthirsty and deceitful. O God, bring them to justice. Rise up and act against those who are destroying the lives of people for the sake of profit. I pray that everyone who has a part in this evil will be brought down—corrupt politicians and authorities, drug manufacturers, drug pushers. Have mercy on them and judge their wickedness. Humble them by Your mighty power. (**Psalm 5:4-6**).

Praying Psalm 103 For Healing

Psalm 103 provides you with a model to pray for healing in the lives of others. You can use the truths in this psalm to plead with God to release His healing power into your life or the lives of others. Read the psalm a couple of times and then bring its truths before the Father

- Father, I pray that _____ will bless You with all his/her being. I ask that _____ would fix his/her focus and faith on You, the blessed and good God (**1, 20-22**).
- Father, I plead that _____ would not forget all of Your benefits. Cause him/her to remember how You have blessed and helped him/her in the past (**1**).
- Father, deal with any sin or sins that might be hindering _____ from receiving Your healing. Draw him/her to confession and repentance (**3, 12**).
- Father, You are the healing God. Be true to Your nature and Your name by healing _____ of _____ (**3**).
- Father, redeem _____ from death. I ask You to deliver _____ from the pain and suffering that he/she is experiencing (**3**).
- Father, I plead with You to crown _____'s life with Your lovingkindness and tender mercies. Satisfy _____ with Your healing so that his/her life is renewed with strength and hope (**5**).

Conquering Your Thought Life

A person's thought life determines his or her lifestyle, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" (Proverbs 4:23, NLT). Because of this, it is essential to guard your thought life. You must yield your thought life to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The following prayer guide will help you to pray concerning your thought life. It can assist you in pleading with God for conquering your thought life. It is God alone who can help you guard and control your thinking. By praying, you are expressing your dependence on God for this. You can also use this prayer guide to intercede for others. It can be helpful in praying for those who are confused or deceived.

Father, I pray that You would enable _____ to deny and put down every idea and proud argument that keeps _____ from knowing You and Your will (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Father, I ask that _____ will reject every rebellious idea that enters _____'s mind. I plead that _____ will think only on those things that please Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Father, I plead that _____'s thought life would glorify You (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Father, transform the way that _____ think(s). Fix _____'s thinking on You, Your Word, and Your will (Romans 12:2).

Father, I ask that _____ would set my/his/her mind on the things of God. Deliver me/him/her from thinking only on the things of this world (Colossians 3:2).

Father, enable _____ to guard my/his/her heart. Help _____ to think on those things that will lead _____ in the path of obedience and righteousness (Proverbs 4:25).

Father, I pray that _____ would fix my/his/her thoughts on what is true honorable and right. Empower _____ to think about those things that are pure, lovely, and admirable. I ask that _____ would focus on things that are excellent and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8).

- Reveal Yourself to _____ during this time of suffering. Show _____ Your ways during this time. Draw him/her to Yourself (6-7).
- O God, have mercy on _____. Be gracious to _____. Release Your healing power into his/her life. Because of Your abounding mercy, set _____ free from _____ (8-10).
- Father, I ask that _____ would trust in You. I pray that _____ would fear You and know that You and You alone are the only Healer. Deliver him/her from any confidence in the strength or wisdom of man. Because of Your great mercy for those who fear You and trust You, grant Your healing in his/her life (11).
- Father, I pray that You would reveal Your compassion to _____. Have compassion for him/her and grant healing to him/her. You know _____'s frame; You are the only One who can heal him/her. You remember that _____ is but dust; You must heal and sustain his/her life. You are the compassionate God. ~~Because of Your compassion, I plead with~~ You to heal _____ (13-14).
- Father, You know how fragile that our lives are. You know that we are like the grass and the flower that are here today and gone tomorrow. Father, _____'s life is fragile. He/She is in need of Your healing. Because of Your unchanging and everlasting mercy, release Your healing into his/her life (15-18).
- Father, I pray that obeying You would be the top priority of _____'s life. Whether healing comes now or later, I pray that _____ would walk with You and remember to do Your commandments (18).
- Father, Your Word declares You have established Your throne in heaven. Your Word states that Your kingdom rules over all. You are the almighty God. You have all power. I confess and believe that You have the power to heal _____. I call on You to grant healing and restoration in _____'s life. By Your almighty power, provide supernatural healing for _____ (19).

NEW PRODUCTS From *The Prayer Closet*

We have developed the following new materials to help you grow and become more effective in prayer:

Praying For Your School Key Ring

This prayer key ring provides you with Scripture prayers to help you intercede for your school or the schools in your area. It is an ideal gift for students who want to have a righteous impact. It is also useful for those who prayerwalk around schools. It will equip you to pray with power and confidence for the schools.

Suggested Donation: \$2.00

Preparing For Worship Bookmark

Are you prepared to worship God every time you meet with God's people? This bookmark will help you to prepare yourself for worship. It contains prayer pointers through the week to aid you in getting ready to worship with God's people. It also contains a prayer guide on how to pray during the worship service. This bookmark will fit in your Bible for your daily use.

Suggested Donation: \$.25



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