



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers In
Prayer

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ISSUE 1

GETTING IN TUNE WITH GOD

When you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, you enter into a personal relationship with God, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (**Galatians 3:26**). At this time, God becomes your Father. You become His own adopted child. You also come to realize that He has a plan for your life. He is guiding you according to His own loving and wise purpose for your life. Your wise and loving Father is doing what is best for you and your relationship to Him.

This sounds simple, doesn't it? However it is anything but simple. A personal relationship to God is not nice, neat, and tidy. It is not simple or easy. It is a relationship where you have to adjust to God even when you desire something else. It is a relationship where you must be willing to trust Him even when you don't understand. It is a relationship where you must believe even though your circumstances tell you otherwise.

In my personal relationship to God, there have been times when I just did not understand what God was doing. I have had times when God called me to obey even though I had no idea what the outcome would be. I have had to say "No" to some of my cherished dreams and fondest desires. This is all a part of living in a relationship with God, your Father and your King. And, all the clichés, trite sayings, and e-mail forwards did not help in dealing with these times.

How do you deal with these times when you just don't understand? How can you learn to adjust your will to the will of your God and Father? Prayer is the key to bringing yourself and your will in line with God and His will. Through prayer, you are not bringing God in tune with you. You are actually getting in tune with God. You are coming in line with Him and what He desires.

Jeremiah 32:17-25 records a prayer of Jeremiah the prophet. In this prayer, he gets in tune with what God desires. His will is brought in line with God's will. He receives the strength to do what God has called him to do even though it does not make any earthly sense.

From this prayer of Jeremiah, I would like to show you that prayer can get you in tune with God. It can help you when you don't understand. It can strengthen you when you are called to do that which makes no sense. It can help you adjust to God when your desires clash with His will.

The Circumstances Around Jeremiah's Prayer (Jeremiah 32:1-16)

Jeremiah 32 records an event that took place during the siege of Jerusalem. The army of the king of Babylon had Jerusalem surrounded. This was the second year of the

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siege of 588-587 B.C. The siege of Jerusalem was now at an advanced stage. The people of Jerusalem were cut off from any outside contact or help. The outlook was dark and the situation desperate.

In the midst of this situation, God gives Jeremiah an unusual command. He tells him to buy his cousin Hanamel's field in Anathoth. Hanamel wanted to sell this field. During the siege, money was limited and he most likely needed the money. And, according to **Leviticus 25**, family property was not to pass into the hands of an outsider. God instructs Jeremiah to buy this field from his cousin.

Can you imagine that? God had already said that the king of Babylon would take the city of Jerusalem (**32:3-5**). All of them, including Jeremiah, would be carried off into captivity. The Babylonians would take control of the land. And they would populate the land with exiles from other places they had conquered.

Jeremiah was buying a piece of land that would be taken over by Babylonians. He was about to be carried off into captivity. He would not be able to take control of, use, or enjoy the land. Yet, God tells him to buy the land.

Have you ever had experiences like this? God led you to do something that did not make sense to you. Perhaps He asked you to give up something you cherished. Or maybe He worked in a way that you did not expect.

This is part of walking with God. It is looking for and expecting the unexpected. You can't put God into a box. You can't confine Him to what you think He ought to be and to do what you think He ought to do. There are times when God will work outside of your conception of Him. There are times when God will move you outside of your comfort zone. In your relationship to God, you will have to learn to adjust to Him. Walking with God is about getting in tune with Him, even though it is outside of your own thinking and comfort zone.

The Prayer Of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:16-25)

Once Jeremiah purchases the land, he then prays to the Lord (**32:16**). This is one of the most God-honoring, God-glorifying prayers in the Bible. In this prayer, Jeremiah exalts the character of God. His focus is on the person and ways of God.

Verse 17: He confesses that God has all power in heaven and earth. He admits that nothing is too hard for Him.

Verse 18: He rejoices in the love, the greatness, and the power of God.

Verse 19: He magnifies God for His great purposes and mighty deeds. He acknowledges that God is at work in all circumstances.

Verses 20-23: He looks back and adores God for what He did in the past for Israel. He praises God for His mighty and miraculous works in Israel's behalf.

Verses 24-25: He acknowledges that the Babylonians will take the city. They will be taken captive and carried off to another land. Yet, Jeremiah is content to do what God commanded. He accepts God's purpose in buying the land. There are no questions; there are no doubts. He trusts God and that is enough for Him. Jeremiah has prayed his heart into submission. Through prayer, he has gotten in tune with God and readily accepts what God has said.

The interesting thing about this prayer is that Jeremiah never makes any request of God. There is not a single petition in the whole prayer. He doesn't ask God to confirm anything. He doesn't pray for miraculous signs or wonders. He doesn't plead with God to work in another way. He focuses on God's character and prays until his heart and mind accepts God's will.

I believe and admit there is a place for confirmation in our walk with God. He can and does confirm His will. There is also a place for miracles and wonders in our relationship with God. Our God is the miracle worker. He is the sign maker. He is still in this business today.

And there are times when we need to wrestle with God. Sometimes we must plead with Him.

But, there will be times when we must be content with God and His ways. We must focus on Him, adoring His character and humbly accepting His way. The Christian life is not always about dramatic confirmations and amazing miracles and wonders. It's not always about wrestling with God until we receive an answer. It is a daily walk in which we have to focus on Him and adjust to Him. It is a lifestyle of following Him, walking in His will and accepting His ways. It is learning to get into such a state that we have no will of our own.

This text reveals that we are to get in tune with God. It shows that even though we might not understand or even like His ways, we are to bring ourselves in line with Him. And prayer is crucial in doing this.

Practical Steps For Getting In Tune With God

God desires to get you to the place where your heart has no will of its own. The following are some suggestions that you can use to help you get in tune with Him.

- ✓ *Ask God to reveal Himself to you as He really is.* Knowing God is the key to getting in tune with Him. The more that we get to know our God, the greater our surrender to God. As long as we confine God to our small knowledge of Him, we will be frustrated and distressed when He works in a way outside of our understanding. Ask God to help you get to know Him in a way that makes you want to relinquish your will to His.
- ✓ *Fill your prayers with praise to God.* Praise releases the power of God into our lives (**Psalm 22:3**). This power can enable you to accept His purpose for your life. It will also give you the strength that you need to do what God has called you to do. As you praise God, you deepen your love for Him and your willingness to live for Him regardless of what His purpose is.

- ✓ *When you pray, spend more time focusing on God's character than on your circumstances.* God desires that we cast our burdens on Him (**1 Peter 5:7**). You can talk to God about your circumstances. You can share with Him about what is happening to you. Yet, don't let that be the focus on your praying. Lift your eyes off of the circumstances to the God who reigns over them (**Psalm 121**). If you focus on your circumstances, it will produce doubt, fear, anxiety, and frustration in your life. If you fix your gaze and faith on Him, it will fill you with faith, confidence, and strength.
- ✓ *Saturate your prayers with the promises of God.* When Jeremiah bought this piece of land, it was a sign to His people. It was a promise that they would return one day (**Jeremiah 32:13-15, 42-44**). In this prayer, Jeremiah expresses confidence that God will do what He promised. As you pray, fill your prayers with His promises. You might want to start a place in your journal for this. Or you could start a promise notebook. Discover God's promises, claim them, and use them in prayer. Praying God's promises will give you the assurance that God will help you and sustain you regardless of what His purpose is in any situation.
- ✓ *Become thoroughly acquainted with God's goodness* (**Genesis 1:31; Exodus 33:19; 2 Chronicles 5:13, 6:41, 30:18; Psalm 25:7-8, 31:19, 34:8, 52:9, 73:1, 84:11, 100:5, 106:1, 107:1, 118:1, 119:68, 135:3, 145:7, 9, 15-16; Jeremiah 33:11-12; Lamentations 3:25; Nahum 1:7; Matthew 5:45, 7:11, 19:17; Acts 14:17; Romans 8:32; James 1:17**). The goodness of God prepares your heart to receive whatever God purposes. When you are convinced that God is good, you know that whatever God does is good. You are more ready to receive and carry out His purpose when you are convicted that He is good in all the situations of life. Fill your heart and mind with this

truth. Read them, memorize them, and ask God to help you gain a greater appreciation and understanding of His goodness. The goodness of God will anchor you no matter what.

- ✓ *Pray for the destruction of your self-centeredness (Mark 8:34-35).* Much of our difficulty in accepting God's purpose rests in our own self-centeredness. We want our way. We want our desires to be filled. We believe that God should work in the way that we desire. Pray that God would destroy the pride and self-centeredness and that He would replace it with a humble and submissive heart.
- ✓ *Talk with God about how He has worked in the past.* In Jeremiah's prayer, he talked with God about His past works for Israel. He looked back at God's provision for His people in the past. This anchored his faith for the present and the future. Past blessings and mercies are the foundation for believing God now and in the future. When you pray, spend time talking with God about His past works and mercy in your life. There are times when I have prayer times based on this sentence, "Lord, do You remember when . . . ?" During this time of prayer, I focus on God's past blessings, deliverances, and mercy. You might consider having times of prayer based on this along with building it into your daily praying.
- ✓ *Remember Isaiah 55:8-9.* God's ways are not our ways. Sometimes our plans and ideas do not match His. We must remember this and rest in His goodness.
- ✓ *Ask God to help you trust Him even when you get answers you don't want to hear.* There are times when the answers we get from God are not the ones that we wanted. This will happen sometimes in our walk with God. Pray for the strength to trust God even when you don't get the answers you desire.
- ✓ *Pray the prayer of abandonment.* In order to get in tune with God, I have found the following prayer by Charles de Foucauld helpful, "Father, I abandon

myself into Your hands; do with me what You will. Whatever You may do, I thank You. I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only Your will be done in me, and in all Your creatures – I wish no more than this, O Lord." Call on God to specify what He wants you to do or what He wants you to lay at His feet.

When You Don't Feel That You Can Pray

What do you do when you don't think you can pray? Perhaps you don't feel that you can continue to seek God. Maybe you just can't pray. There will come times when it will be difficult to pray – especially in times of adversity or when our will is the opposite of God's purpose.

The following are some suggestions on what you can do when don't feel that you can pray:

- *Keep praying; don't give up (Matthew 7:11; Colossians 4:2).* The Bible does not give you the option of giving up in your praying. And this is just what the enemy wants. Seek Him even if the feelings aren't there. God hears you even when you don't think He is.
- *Pray or sing hymns to God.* Pray or sing hymns that express how you feel or want to feel. You could play a CD with hymns on it if you're uncomfortable singing. These hymns can help us release our doubt and pain.
- *Saturate yourself with the Psalms.* The Psalms are prayers of believers in all types of situations. These can give you strength and insight for your situation. Pray these Psalms to God. They can help you find the words when you don't think you can.
- *Rest on God's promises.* Discover and claim His promises in prayer. You might consider personalizing them by writing them out and inserting your name. Ask Him for the faith to believe His promises.
- *Write your prayers out.* This helps you to focus and to share what is in your

heart. At the top of the page, write "Dear Father." Then write out all the emotions that you are experiencing. Don't ask for anything until you've expressed all your emotions. God cares and He can take whatever you say.

- **Fast.** By fasting, you can express your urgency to the Lord. Your intimacy with God is a greater need than physical nourishment for your body.
- **Cry to God.** You can cry during your prayers. Tears are "liquid prayers." Job poured out tears to God (**Job 16:20**). David asked God to record his tears on a scroll (**Psalms 56:8**). Go ahead and cry. Crying is praying in God's sight. He hears your tears and responds.
- **Thank God for the pain.** If you've never done this, it may sound like a pat answer. It may even sound calloused. Yet, Scripture teaches us to thank God in all things (**1 Thessalonians 5:18**). There have been times when I have hurt so bad that I didn't have a thankful fiber in my body. Sometimes I've had to thank God out of sheer obedience. But, thanking Him for the pain and the struggle helped me release control of the situation. It brought His power and grace into my life in fresh and new ways. And it reopened the channels of communication with Him.
- **Go out and look at the heavens (Psalm 8).** I've gone out into my front yard at all hours of the night just to gaze at the sky. I've been known to be out at 2 a.m., gazing into the heavens and praying to the mighty God. Gazing at the heavens at night helps you to put things into perspective.
- **Share the burden with others.** Sometimes your burdens are just too heavy for one person. Seek out a trusted friend or prayer partner who will pray for you. Confess, "I just can't pray. Will you pray for me?"

Praying For Your Neighbors

Your heavenly Father longs for you to pray for the people around you. He desires that you intercede concerning the needs of those around you. He yearns for you to minister to your area through prayer. God's call to you is summed up in **Colossians 4:2**, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." This includes praying for your neighbors.

In **Matthew 22:39**, Jesus sums up the law by saying, "And the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" God calls on us to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is His will. It is the desire of His heart. A part of loving your neighbor is praying for your neighbor. If you love your neighbor, you will talk to God about him or her. As this new year begins, will you focus on praying for your neighbors? The following prayer guide is offered to help you pray for your neighbors. This prayer guide is based on the acrostic "H.O.M.E.S."

Health (Exodus 15:26)

- Plead that God's healing power would be released in the home.
- Pray that God would help and encourage those who are suffering in the home.

Office (Ecclesiastes 3:22; 1 Corinthians 10:31)

- Ask God to bless the work of each person in the home.
- Ask that God would help them with work-related pressure.
- Pray that each one will find fulfillment in his/her work.

Money (Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 6:17-18)

- Pray that God would give greater finances to the home.
- Ask God to give each home the wisdom to use money.
- Plead that all the material needs of the family will be met.

Emotions (Psalm 147:3, Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Luke 4:18)

- Pray that God would grant healthy, loving relationships among the family members and those around them.
- Plead that God would deal with any problems in the home.
- Ask God to grant emotional healing to those who are hurting and wounded.

Spiritual needs (John 3:16, 1 Peter 2:1-2)

- Plead that each person in the home would have a genuine relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
- Pray that each person in the home will grow in faith.
- Ask God to remove any hindrances that would keep the family from Christ and spiritual growth.
- Pray that the family will be diligent in a local church.

You can also use this prayer guide for prayerwalking. You might even consider using it for a prayer ministry to the area around you. You might ask the believers to adopt streets and roads. They could use this prayer guide to pray for the people on their roads and streets. The Prayer Closet has this prayer guide on a laminated 3 X 5 card that you can keep in your Bible or carry with you when you prayerwalk. These are available for a suggested donation of \$1.00 or 10 for \$6.00. Request **The "H.O.M.E.S." Prayer Card.**

Praying Your Pastor's Sermon

One of the most effective ways to grow spiritually is to pray your pastor's sermons. What I mean by this is to use each point of the sermon as a point for prayer. Take each point of the sermon and talk to God about it. Let each point be a conversation piece between God and you. Ask God how to apply it to your life. By doing this, you can become a hearer and doer of the Word. It can also deepen your intercession for others.

In order to pray the pastor's sermons, you might consider the following suggestions:

- ⇒ *Pray during the week that God will guide and empower your pastor to preach the Word.* Call on the Holy Spirit to provide insight to your pastor. Plead that your pastor will be spiritually ready to preach the Word in the worship services.
- ⇒ *Ask God to help you prepare for the sermon.* Pray that He will get your heart ready to hear and receive the Word of God.
- ⇒ *Enter the worship service expecting to hear from God.* When you enter the worship service, expect that God is going to speak to you and your particular spiritual needs.
- ⇒ *Before the service, ask the Spirit to open your heart to receive the truth.* Call on the Spirit to make your heart fertile ground for the seed of the Word.
- ⇒ *Take notes during the sermon.* Strive to listen to the pastor. Record the points of your pastor's sermon. You may record concepts or particular statements.
- ⇒ *Spend time that afternoon or night talking with God about the points of the sermon.* Don't allow too much time to lapse between hearing the Word and meditating on it. As soon as you can, begin talking with God about the points of the sermon.
- ⇒ *Ask others about the insights that God gave them during the sermon.* The Holy Spirit can provide you with powerful insight from other believers.

Building A Praying Family

God desires that His church be a house of prayer (**Matthew 21:13; 1 Timothy 2:1-2**). God longs for the church to be characterized by seeking Him. Prayer must be the top priority of the church. Yet, this can be a reality only if the church is made up of praying families. A church will only be as strong as those families who constitute the church. In other words, a praying church is the result of praying families.

Prayer begins at home. Teaching families and children to pray starts at home. We cannot leave this responsibility solely to the church. It is important that children learn to pray at home. Learning to pray at home makes it a natural part of their lives. This way it becomes part of their everyday lives.

For this reason, there is a great need to build praying families. Our homes need to be characterized by prayer. This should be the priority of our families. Praying families will lead to churches filled with prayer.

The following are some suggestions that you might consider in building a praying family:

- *Ask that the Holy Spirit will create a spirit of prayer in your home (Galatians 4:6).* The Holy Spirit is the Author of prayer. He is the One who enables us to pray and seek our Father. Call on Him to work in each family member, creating the desire to pray and seek God. Pray that He will stir your hearts to seek the Father.
- *Set the example in prayer.* Let your children see you pray. Let them see you seek God in all the circumstances of life. Children learn by example. Ask God to give you the wisdom and strength to set the example for your child when it comes to prayer.
- *Avoid "Christianese."* When you pray with your children, avoid trite sayings and clichés. Someone has said that within two years of becoming a Christian, most believers are unable to communicate with unbelievers. We pick up and use the Christian jargon around us. This "Christianese" can often be a hindrance to genuine communication with God. When you pray with your children, pray simply and directly.
- *Develop a family prayer time.* You might consider developing a time when the family comes together to pray as a family. You could do this once a week or once a month. You might consider doing it before bedtime. During this time, you could share prayer requests and answers to prayer. You might also

use this time to teach your children about the basics of prayer.

- *Pray with your child.* Take opportunities to pray one-on-one with your child. You might do this with them at bedtime. You can look for other opportunities for this. It can give your child the wonderful sense of the importance of praying with others. It will also show them the emphasis that you as a parent place on prayer.
- *Ask your child to pray for you.* You might consider asking your child to pray about some concern that you have. Give them some specific concerns of their own and have them pray about it. This will communicate to them how important you feel that their prayers are and how important prayer is in general.
- *Pray spontaneously with your children.* Be sensitive to times when you can pray with your children. You can use a variety of circumstances for this. You might see something on the news. You may hear some bad news concerning someone they know. They may share with you about something that happened to them. Use what they see, hear, and feel for opportunities to seek God.
- *Make a family prayer journal.* In your family prayer journal, you can record the requests of each family. If your children are old enough, they can take turns writing their prayer concerns. Over time look back and see how God has worked and answered. This is a great way for your children to learn to seek the Lord, making petitions of Him. It is also an excellent reminder of all the answers and blessings that God has provided.
- *Fill your prayers with praise and thanksgiving.* It is important that your children hear you praise and thank God. This will help them to see the need for it. It will also provide them a good example of how to pray. And it can help them avoid the trap of only making requests of God.

Emotional Healing Prayer Conference

- *Create a "prayer album."* A prayer album consists of pictures of people that you will pray for. The pictures help you and your children to focus in prayer. You might consider placing Scripture verses and prayers in the album. The pictures can be of family members, friends, church leaders and members, or others.
- *Use your refrigerator as a prayer station.* You can place a variety of prayer requests on the refrigerator. Emphasize to each family member to pray about the person or the need when they go to the refrigerator. You can place prayer requests or pictures on your refrigerator so that the family can pray about that need or person.

The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc. is hosting a prayer conference on emotional healing on **January 24, 2004**. This conference will be held at the **Hickory Chamber of Commerce** from **9:00 to 12:30**. There is no charge for this conference and is open to anyone. Dr. Kevin Meador will be leading the conference. This conference will focus on praying for emotional healing in the lives of people. During this time, a variety of subjects will be addressed: what emotional healing is and what it is not, the biblical basis for emotional healing, the hindrances to receiving this healing, steps to emotional wholeness, and developing a ministry of healing in your church. You will also receive a packet of materials that will help you in praying for emotional healing. If you would like to attend this conference or if you have questions, please contact us at The Prayer Closet.



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