



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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The Believer And The Word

The Word of God and prayer are complementary. They are inseparably joined together. Prayer enables you to gain an understanding of the Word of God. Through prayer, you can plead for the Holy Spirit to teach you the Word of God. He is the One who teaches the believer the Word of God, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (**John 14:26**). The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (**1 Peter 1:21; 2 Samuel 23:2**). Since He inspired the Word, it is He who can grant understanding of the Word. Through prayer, you can plead with the Holy Spirit to teach you the Word that He has inspired.

Yet, the Word of God teaches you how to pray. The Bible contains commands and instructions concerning prayer. It reveals examples of prayer that reaches God and touches earth. It reveals the will of God that you can plead in prayer. It declares the promises of God that you can claim in prayer. The Word of God is the prayer manual of the believer. It is a rich resources that can guide you and help you in your prayer life.

Too many times believers will divide their quiet time between the Word of God and prayer. The believer will spend time reading

the Word of God. The tragedy is that the believer will then close his or her Bible and begin to pray. Instead of closing your Bible to pray, you need to pray with an open Bible. Your prayer life should be grounded in the Word of God. Your prayer life must be built on the foundation of the Word of God. **There simply is no healthy prayer life apart from a consistent diet of the milk and the meat of the Word of God.**

Since the Word of God is so important to the believer's prayer life, the believer must labor to understand and put into practice the Word of God. Many believers are "under" the Word, but not "in" the Word. These believers listen to sermons, Sunday school lessons, or small-group Bible studies. Yet, they never dig into the Word of God for themselves. They are not serious about gaining an understanding of the Word of God. This will leave them immature in the faith and powerless in prayer. The believer must have a commitment to get in the Word and strive to understand and obey its teachings.

Someone has remarked that if believers wiped the dust off their Bibles simultaneously, it would cause the greatest dust storm this world has ever seen. Is this true of you? Have you been neglecting the Word of God? Perhaps you have never had a serious commitment to understand and obey the Bible. This is crucial for your spiritual maturity and

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your prayer life. The believer is to pursue spiritual maturity, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (**2 Peter 2:2**). In order to do this, you need to understand and obey the Word. The believer can have power in prayer, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (**John 15:7**). Understanding and obeying the Word of God is crucial to power in prayer. As you understand and obey the Word, you will grow in maturity and gain greater power and ability in prayer.

In order to understand and obey the Word of God, the believer needs a commitment to be “in” the Word. This means that he or she must discipline himself or herself in seven areas. These seven areas are the ways that a believer is to handle the Word of God. In order to gain understanding in the Word and put its teachings into practice, the believer needs to develop these disciplines connected to the Word of God.

Hear The Word

The believer needs to take time to listen to the Word of God. Jesus encourages the believer to hear the Word of God, “But He said, ‘More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it’” (**Luke 11:28**). Merely listening to the Word of God is not the point. You must hear it and keep or obey it. Yet, Jesus is telling us that it is important to hear the Word. **Romans 10:17** also emphasizes hearing the Word, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” God’s people need to hear the Word of God, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (**1 Timothy 4:13**). Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul instructs Timothy to read the Word in the worship services so that believers could hear it.

For most believers, hearing the Word means disciplining themselves to faithfully attend a church where the Word of God is preached. Yet, one can also hear the Word by listening to sermons on tape or on Christian radio. In order to hear the Word of God, you need to prepare yourself to receive the Word of

God. The following are some suggestions on how to prepare to hear God’s Word. These suggestions primarily focus on hearing the Word of God in a worship service, but, there are principles in this that can apply to other instances where you are going to listen to the Word of God.

Before the Worship Service

- (1) Get a good night’s sleep on Saturday night so that you can be sharp and energetic for the worship on Sunday (Remember: Saturday Night Live is usually Sunday Morning Dead).
- (2) Prepare ahead for the Sunday morning pressures and the rush to get ready.
- (3) Plan to arrive at the place of worship early and not late.
- (4) Remind yourself that you are entering the presence of God through worship.
- (5) Spend time in the Word and prayer on Sunday morning.
- (6) Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare you to worship and hear the Word.
- (7) Pray for the others involved in the worship.
- (8) Pray for the preacher.
- (9) Confess and repent of sin.

During the Worship Service

- (1) Greet one another warmly.
- (2) Pray silently as the worship service begins.
- (3) Sing with enthusiasm and joy.
- (4) Remember that you are not here to worship or criticize the preacher.
- (5) Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you understanding in the truth that the preacher is presenting in his sermon.
- (6) Open your Bible and concentrate on what is being said.
- (7) Take notes.

After the Worship Service

- (1) Ask the preacher any questions about the unclear parts of the sermon.
- (2) Think about how the truth of this sermon applies to your life and what steps you will need to implement this truth in your life.
- (3) Ask the Holy Spirit to plant the truth of the Word into your heart and cause it to bear fruit in your life.

(4) Discuss the sermon with family members or other church members. Ask how the truth of the sermon affected them and how the Holy Spirit dealt with them through it.

Read the Word

The believer is not only to hear the Word but also to read the Word. Why should the believer read the Word of God? In the gospels, the Lord Jesus often questions a person's understanding of the Scriptures with the searching phrase, "Have you not read . . .?" He assumes that those who profess to be the people of God would read the Word of God. In **Matthew 4:4**, the Lord Jesus Christ declares, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Just as man is to eat bread on a daily basis, he is also to read and receive the Word of God. If we are to live according to every word of God, doesn't that imply we are to read every word of God? The Bible is the inspired Word of God, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (**2 Timothy 3:16**). It is the very word of the living God to man. Shouldn't this move us to be diligent to read the Word on a daily basis? God promises that those who read and heed his Word will be blessed, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (**Revelation 1:3**). Yet, it is only those who discipline themselves to read the Word that are blessed.

You need to spend time reading God's Word on a daily basis. How often are you tempted? Every day. How often do you need encouragement? Every day. How often do you need guidance? Every day. How often do you face pressure? Every day. How often do you have problems? Every day. How often do you need instruction? Every day? The only way that you are going to find the provision for these needs is by reading the Word of God on a daily basis.

The following are some practical suggestions concerning Bible reading. In order

to be diligent in reading the Word, there are two basic steps that you need to take. *First, you need to make time to read the Bible.* Discipline yourself to find the time. Try to make it the same time every day. One of the main reasons that Christians never read the entire Bible is discouragement. You need to make a commitment to read a portion of God's Word on a daily basis. Be determined to spend some time daily in the Word. Tape-recorded readings of the Bible have proven that you can read the Bible in seventy-two hours. In no more than fifteen minutes a day, you can read the Bible in less than a year's time. Only five minutes a day takes you through the Bible in less than three years. Devote some time in your day to read the Word.

Second, you need to find a Bible-reading plan. This will give you a goal of what you need to read daily and will be a help in being consistent in your reading of God's Word. There are inexpensive Bible reading plans at most Christian bookstores. Many study Bibles will contain a Bible reading plan that you can follow. Even if you don't read the Bible in a year, keep a record of those books that you have read. By doing this, you will know when you read every book of the Bible.

Study the Word

The believer is to be an individual who studies the Word of God. The believer is to have a heart for Bible study. The Bible offers examples of believers who studied the Word. One example is Ezra. **Ezra 7:10** declares, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel." Ezra had a commitment to study the Word. He disciplined himself to study the truth of the Word.

Another example is from **Acts 17:11**. Paul and Silas preached the gospel in Berea and many surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ. Notice how they responded to the Word of God, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the

Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” The willingness of these people to study the Word of God is commended by God. God desires that His people diligently search and study the Scripture.

Another believer who had a heart to study the Word of God is the apostle Paul. Anticipating the coming of Timothy, he writes in **2 Timothy 4:13**, “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.” The parchments that Paul asks for certainly included copies of the Scripture. In his cold and miserable confinement in prison, Paul desires to things: a cloak so that his body could be warmed and the Word to study so that his mind and heart could be warmed. Paul had experienced some of the greatest miracles any human has ever had the privilege to experience. He had seen heaven (**2 Corinthians 12:1-6**) and the resurrected Christ (**Acts 9:5**). He had experienced the Holy Spirit’s power for miracles (**Acts 14:10**). He had experienced the Holy Spirit’s power for the writing of Holy Scripture (**2 Peter 3:16**). Yet, this same man continued to study the Word of God until he died. If Paul needed to study the Word of God, surely you and I need to discipline ourselves to study the Word?

Reading and studying the Word of God complement each other. It is not enough to read the Word. The believer also needs to study the Word. Reading the Word of God gives you a broad understanding of the Word of God. Studying gives you deeper understanding of the Word of God. Reading will give you the big picture while studying will show you in greater detail the meaning of the Word of God. Both reading and studying are needed in order to understand the Word.

The following are some practical guidelines for studying the Word of God. These guidelines can be used to help you in your study of the Word of God.

(1) *Be diligent to confess your sins.* Refusing to deal with sin in your life breaks fellowship with God. It will hinder you in your study of the Word of God. Before beginning your Bible study, stop and confess any known sins.

(2) *Pray for illumination.* Illumination refers to the Holy Spirit’s work of enabling the believer to understand the truth of God’s Word. Since understanding of the Word of God can only come through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, you need to pray for illumination. You need to ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the Word of God (**Psalms 119:12, 18, 27, 35**).

(3) *Have a commitment to obey what you learn.* Jesus pointed out that a prerequisite to knowing the truth is willingness to obey the truth. He declared in **John 7:17**, “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” The one who is willing to obey God will receive God’s instruction. It is useless to pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you the Word of God if you have no intention of obeying it.

(4) *Be original in your study of the Word.* There are numerous commentaries and Bible study helps available to the believer. Yet, the believer must begin by reading and thinking about the passage for himself or herself. Personal Bible study does not depend solely on what others have said about the Scriptures, but must involve the student in the Bible itself. Libraries have been written about the Bible, but there is only one Bible. Go directly to the source. As you study, compare Scripture with Scripture. Labor for yourself to understand its meaning. Before you go to commentaries and other books, strive to understand what the text is teaching.

(5) *Write down your findings.* Write down in your own words what you have learned from your study. An important part of the learning process is reproducing in your own words what you have studied. Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators, said, “Thoughts disentangle themselves passing over the lips or through the pencil tips.” If you want to master the Word, you need to write down what you learn.

Memorize the Word

Many Christians view memorizing Scripture as an impossible task. Ask Christians to memorize Scripture and they will

respond as eagerly as a person who is told that he needs to have a root canal. Some say that they have a bad memory and cannot memorize Scripture. Others equate memorizing Scripture with the memory work that they had to do in school. They see it as boring and dull with no value. Yet, there is tremendous value in memorizing the Word of God. Why should you memorize Scripture?

(1) *Memorizing Scripture is a means of God's guidance.* **Psalm 119:24** declares, "Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors." As you memorize the Word, the Holy Spirit will bring the Word to your memory when you need guidance from Him in the situations of your life. He will bring the Scripture to your mind that you have memorized to guide you.

(2) *Memorizing Scripture supplies you with spiritual power.* When the Word is stored in your mind, it is available for the Holy Spirit to take and bring it to your attention when you need it most. This will give you added power against temptation. This is why the psalmist wrote, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (**Psalm 119:11**). When you are tempted, the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind verses of Scripture that deal with this temptation. This will give you greater power in overcoming the temptation. This is an illustration of **Ephesians 6:17**. A verse of Scripture brought to your mind at a pertinent moment can be the weapon that makes the difference in a spiritual battle. The Word then becomes your spiritual sword to help you fight in the midst of your temptation.

(3) *Memorizing Scripture will aid you in witnessing and counseling.* By memorizing the Word, you will be prepared for unexpected witnessing and counseling opportunities. This is illustrated in the life of Peter (**Acts 2:14-40**). Much of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost was quotations from the Old Testament. When you memorize the Word, the Holy Spirit can bring to your mind a verse or verses of Scripture when you witness to or counsel with others.

(4) *Memorizing Scripture strengthens your faith.* **Proverbs 22:17-19** gives the following commands, "Incline your ear," "apply your

heart," and "let them all be fixed upon your lips." These phrases are referring to the proverbs or the Word of God. A believer is to incline his ear, to apply his heart, and let its truth be fixed on his lips. Why is the believer to do this? The answer is given in **Proverbs 22:19**, "So that your trust may be in the Lord." A believer memorizes or fixes its truth on his lips so that the Word repeatedly reinforces the truth especially when he needs it the most. The believer will have the truth ready to reinforce his faith when circumstances and feelings attempt to weaken his faith.

(5) *Memorizing Scripture enables you to meditate on Scripture.* Memorizing Scripture will fuel your meditation on the truths of God's Word. When you memorize verses of Scripture, it will enable you to meditate on them at any time and in any place. As you memorize the Word, you can become like the psalmist, "Oh, how I love Your law, it is my meditation all the day" (**Psalm 119:97**). Whether your driving a car, walking, running, standing in line, or eating a meal, you can meditate on the Word because you have memorized it.

(6) *Memorizing the Scripture will strengthen your prayer life.* When you memorize the Word, you will be able to use the Scripture in your praying. This will sharpen your praise, deepen your confession, broaden your thanksgiving, and focus your intercession.

You may not think you can memorize Scripture, but, you can. For most, memorizing Scripture is a matter of motivation. If you can remember names, addresses, phone numbers, and birthdays, you can memorize Scripture. I was talking with my mother one day about memorizing Scripture. She said, "Kevin, I just can't memorize the Word. I don't have a good enough memory to do it." I responded, "Mom, I've seen you come into this kitchen and cook entire meals without ever having to look at a recipe." She then shot back, "But, I'm always cooking and know those recipes . . . Oh, I see your point." For some, it may take a lot of hard work. Nevertheless, you can memorize the Word. If you will continually work at it, you can memorize the Scripture.

The following are some practical suggestions to help you in memorizing the Word:

(1) *Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to memorize the Word.* Call on Him to grant you the power that you need to memorize the Word. Plead with Him to make **Philippians 4:13** a reality in your life.

(2) *Have a plan of memorizing the Word.* There are several good prepackaged Scripture memory plans available through Christian booksellers and bookstores. You could select verses on a particular topic where the Lord is working in your life. If you need greater faith, memorize verses that deal with faith. If you have been tempted to commit a particular sin, memorize verses that deal with this sin. You might consider memorizing portions of Scripture. You could begin memorizing the Psalms, Proverbs, or a book of the Bible.

(3) *Write the verses out.* Make a list of the verses on a sheet of paper or write each one on separate index card.

(4) *Draw picture-reminders.* You do not have to make elaborate drawings; they don't have to be masterpieces. You could make a rough sketch of a picture of something that will help you to remember the verse. This makes the verse visual and puts the picture-is-worth-a-thousand-words principle to work for you. One simple picture can remind you of a couple of dozen words. This is especially true if the drawing illustrates some action described in the verse. An example of this is **Ephesians 6:17**. A drawing of a sword with this verse would be an excellent reminder. This method is especially helpful when you are memorizing consecutive portions of Scripture.

(5) *Memorize the verses word-for-word.* Don't settle for getting close or getting the "main idea". There is a temptation to lower the standard in this matter. Memorize it word for word and learn the reference too.

(6) *Get a partner who will hold you accountable.* Find someone that you can memorize Scripture with and that will hold you accountable in this matter.

(7) *Review and meditate on the Word of God on a daily basis.* There is no principle of Scripture memory that is more important than

the principle of review. Without adequate review, you will eventually lose most of what you memorize.

Meditate on the Word

Meditation has fallen on hard times in the Christian community. It is unfortunate, but, meditation has become identified with non-Christian systems of thought than with biblical Christianity. It is most often associated with yoga, transcendental meditation, relaxation therapy, or the New Age movement. Because of this, many in the Christian community are uncomfortable with the whole subject and are suspicious of those who practice it.

Yet, we must realize that God's Word teaches us that the believer is to meditate (**Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2**). At the same time, we must also understand that the type of meditation encouraged in the Word of God differs from other kinds of meditation. First, biblical meditation involves filling your mind with God and truth. Other forms of meditation advocate a form of meditation in which you do your best to empty your mind. Second, biblical meditation requires constructive mental activity. Other forms of meditation are an attempt to achieve complete mental passivity. Finally, biblical meditation is for the purpose of drawing us closer to God and effecting the changes in us that He desires to make. Other forms of meditation are an attempt to "create our own reality."

Meditation goes beyond hearing, reading, studying, and memorizing the Word. These are the ways that we receive the Word. Yet, meditation is fully absorbing the Word and its meaning into our lives. It is when we personalize the Word. Meditation is the process of seeing how the truth that we learn from the Word of God applies in our lives. The Word often does not have a deep effect on us because we do not meditate on its truth. The Puritan pastor Thomas Watson wrote, "The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation."

How can you meditate on the Word of God? The following are some suggestions on how you can meditate on the Word.

(1) *Select an appropriate passage of Scripture.* The easiest way to choose what passage to meditate on is to pick the one that stands out the most to you when you read or hear the Word of God. Often the Holy Spirit will impress on you a certain part of the Word because that is the very part that He wants you to meditate on that day. In addition, verses that conspicuously relate to your concerns and personal needs are clearly targets for meditation. You could also meditate on verses that you have memorized.

(2) *Repeat the verse in different ways.* This method takes the verse or phrase of Scripture and turns it like a diamond to examine every part. An example of this is **Psalms 121:2**.

My help comes from the Lord.
 My **help** comes from the Lord.
 My help **comes** from the Lord.
 My help comes **from** the Lord.
 My help comes from **the** Lord.
 My help comes from the **Lord**.

The purpose of this is to think deeply on the truth that flashes through your mind each time you read the verse, emphasizing its various parts. This is especially helpful in concentrating on a passage or when insights just come slowly from a text.

(3) *Rewrite it in your own words.* By doing this, you are focusing your attention on the text and stimulating your flow of thinking.

(4) *Pray through the passage.* When you pray through a passage, you are submitting your mind to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and are increasing your spiritual perception. It is an invitation for the Holy Spirit to hold His divine light over the words of the Bible to show you what you cannot see without Him.

(5) *Record the insights that you receive when you meditate.*

Obey the Word

Understanding the Word of God is not our main problem. Obeying the Word is. Most

of the Word is abundantly clear in its meaning. Our difficulty is in applying its truth to our life. Our struggle is in putting into practice what the Word teaches. It is not enough to hear, read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Word. These are disciplines that we need to practice. Yet, we fall short of God's demand if this is all that we do.

God does not want you to simply hear the Word. He wants you to be obedient to the Word. God's desire is stated in **James 1:22**, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." According to James, we can experience God's truth so powerfully that what the Lord wants us to do becomes as plain as our face in the morning mirror (**James 1:23-25**). However, if we do not apply this truth and seek to obey it, we deceive ourselves into thinking that we have gained some practical value, regardless of how wonderful the experience of discovering the truth has been. The one who is blessed is the one who does what the Word says.

Your obedience to the Word has to be **intentional**. What I mean by this is that you have to plan to obey the Word. You must determine what the Word is saying to you and then decide how to implement this into your life. Obedience is not a coincidence. It is a determined decision based on the truth of the Word. We often do not obey because we do not apply the truth to our lives. We do not think through its practical application in our lives and we do not determine how we are going to respond in light of the truth of God's Word. The purpose of hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word is not to gain information. It is to understand its truth, apply it to our lives, and then live it out.

How can you learn to be obedient to the Word of God? The following are some practical suggestions for learning how to apply and obey the Word of God.

(1) *Expect to discover application.* When you come to the Word of God, expect to find something that you need to put into practice in your life. Anticipate the discovery of something that God wants you to do or that God wants you to change. Take every word of the Word

of God as a word spoken directly to yourself. Believe that what you are reading is meant for you as well as for the first recipients of the Bible.

(2) *Meditate for the purpose of finding application.* As you meditate on the Word, do this for the purpose of discovering how it applies to your life. Think about what God is saying to you in the passage.

(3) *Ask questions of the text.* The best way to meditate on the Word is to ask questions of the text. The more questions you ask and answer about a verse of Scripture, the more you will understand it and the more clearly you will be able to see how to apply it to yourself. There are times when a verse of the Word will have such an evident application to your life that it will seemingly jump off the page at you. Yet, you must often interview the verse of the Word, patiently asking questions of the text until you understand how it applies to your life. The following are some questions that you can ask of a text to find application to your life:

Does the text reveal something I should believe about God?

Does the text reveal a sin that I should confess and repent of?

Does the text reveal something that I should praise God for or give thanks to Him for?

Does the text reveal something about others or myself?

Does the text reveal something that I should have a new attitude about?

Does the text reveal something that I should make a decision about?

Does the text reveal something that I should do for the sake of Christ?

You could also think about how the truth applies to the different areas of your life. These areas include:

Your relationship to God

Your family

Your church

Your job

God may be showing you changes that you need to make or actions you need to take in these areas. The key issue is to think about

how the truth of the passage applies to your life. Then, you need to make the necessary changes or take the necessary actions concerning these things.

You may already be doing this. If so, let me encourage you to continue doing this. If you have not been doing this, let me encourage you to start. The “Bible Study Insights” worksheet has been designed to help you apply the Word of God to your life. This worksheet resulted from my counseling ministry. This worksheet is designed to help people change. It is taking the Word of God applying it to one’s life in order to be changed and to be more obedient to the Word of God. You can make copies of this worksheet or you can set a page like this in your journal.

The “Bible Study Insights” worksheet is based on **2 Timothy 3:16-17**. This passage reveals the purpose of the Word of God. The apostle Paul states that the Word of God is profitable for four things. The purpose of God’s Word is to teach, reprove, correct, and train the believer in righteousness. Each of these areas is necessary if you are to become a mature and equipped man or woman of God. You need to apply the following questions to what you learn from the Word:

Teaching: What is the command or principle in this passage or verse?

Reproof: How have I failed to observe this command or principle in my life?

Correction: What do I need to do in light of this truth?

Training in Righteousness: How do I do it?

By asking and answering these questions, it will enable you to apply the truth to your life. This will enable you to walk in a deeper obedience toward God.

The final section of the “Bible Study Insights” worksheet is the “Action Sentence”. This is the place where you make a concrete determination of how you will carry out this truth. This is the place where you state in a sentence how you will change or what you will do in light of the truth of God’s Word. As I stated earlier, obedience has to be intentional. You must understand the truth, meditate on it, apply it to your life, and then make the

necessary changes or take the necessary actions in light of God's Word.

Your "Action Sentence" needs to be as specific as possible. Let's say that you have just been studying and meditating on **2 Corinthians 5:18**, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation." You feel convicted that the passage is calling on you to be a witness of the gospel. God has saved you through the gospel; now you feel that you need to be sharing that same gospel with others. Your "Action Sentence" should not be "I will be a witness for Jesus." This is good, but it is rather general and would be easy to forget about. Your "Action Sentence" should be, "I will witness to and pray for the salvation of John, Fred, and Roger." This provides you with a specific and concrete response that you can make to the Word of God.

After your Bible study, you need to be able to name at least one definite response that you will make to what you have encountered in the Word. Whether or not you utilize this worksheet, you need to consciously commit yourself to at least one action or one change after you have been in the Word. If you are not striving to do this, you are simply a hearer of the Word and not a doer of the Word.

Pray the Word

The Word of God is the prayer manual for the believer. Not only does it teach us how to pray, it shows us how to pray. When I say, "pray the Word," I mean to take the Word of God and put it in your own words and then pray this to God. You can either paraphrase it or you can take out the personal pronouns and place your name or the names of others.

Why should you pray the Word of God? **The first reason that you should pray the Word of God is because it is the revealed will of God.** In the Bible, you have the revelation of the mind and heart of God. It reveals what God wills. It teaches us what God desires. When you are praying the Word, you are praying exactly in line with the will of God.

Do you believe that it is the will of God for a believer to have a deep desire for God? Do believe that it is the will of God for a believer to seek Him with all his or her heart? This is exactly what the Word of God says, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (**Psalms 63:1**). You could take this verse and make the following request, "O God, You are (person's name) God; I ask You that _____ will seek You early; I pray that _____'s will thirst for you and long for you like a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." You are praying exactly in line with the will of God. You can have confidence in your prayers based on the Word (**1 John 5:14**). When you pray the Word back to God, you speak to God in the words of God with the truth of God.

Second, praying the Word gets you "unstuck". Many believers are not diligent in prayer because they have had mediocre experiences with prayer. They get distracted when they pray. Their prayers are boring, vague, and predictable. Many times, we have a hard time getting started. Words and ideas fail us. By using the Word in your praying, you will have an abundance of words and ideas to bring before your heavenly Father. You will be able to pray specifically and confidently.

Next, praying the Word helps you get your memory back. There are times when we pray that we feel overwhelmed by feelings and needs that our prayers don't seem to reach beyond the problem. We forget God's promises, power, provision, character, faithfulness, goodness, and mercy. By praying the truths of the Word, it will help you remember who God is and what God can do.

Another reason to pray the Word is that it makes you sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leadership. As you study the Word and pray the Word, God may give you specific insights in how to pray for a person or about a situation. He may burden you about a particular request that you need to make for a person or a situation. By praying the Word, He can prompt you to pray for the will of God for a person or a situation. The Holy Spirit often

grants His leadership to pray as we pray the Word of God.

A final reason for praying the Word is that it helps us to pray when we do not know what to pray. Life is complex. There are times when you are not going to know what to pray. In these times, the Word of God can be an anchor for your prayer life. The Word will reveal concrete and definite requests that you can make for others and their situations even when you are not sure what to pray. When you pray from the Bible, you can know that you are praying for the things that God desires. You may not totally understand it, but Holy Spirit does, and God's will is done.

How can you learn to pray the Word of God? The following are some practical suggestions to help you grow in your ability to use the Word of God in your praying. These suggestions are offered to help you pursue a more intimate prayer life by using the Word of God.

(1) *Spend time daily in the Word of God.* You will not be able to pray the Word if you are not spending time in the Word on a daily basis. Not only will hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word increase your knowledge of the Word and enable you to obey Him, it will also deepen and strengthen your prayer life.

(2) *Keep a record of verses and passages that you can use in prayer.* You can do this in your personal journal or you might consider having a separate notebook to do this. As you encounter the Word through hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating, record those verses or passages that you can turn into prayer requests or reasons to plead with God. These could be prayer requests that you can pray for yourself or for others. Keep a record of these. You might even consider putting them under headings. This will help you find them more readily when you have to pray about that specific need.

(3) *Compile a list of verses that speak to a particular need.* You can use a good concordance or study Bible in doing this. You can also find topical Bibles and books that arrange Scripture passages from the Word of God. By doing this, you will have verses that

speak to a particular need and you can then pray them for the person or the situation. You will know the will of God concerning this situation and can pray in His will concerning the situation. An example would be compiling verses that deal with "hope". When you encounter someone who needs hope, you will have an arsenal of prayer requests that you can take to the Father's throne to intercede in behalf of this person.

Summary

Will you make a fresh commitment to God's Word? For some, this material is a review of things that you are already putting into practice. I pray that you will be stirred as never before to pursue God through His Word. If you are not putting these things into practice, will you consider implementing these things in your life? Encountering God through His Word by hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating on, obeying, and praying will change your life. It will deepen your knowledge of and intimacy with God. It will enable you to walk in a fuller obedience to God's will. It will strengthen and empower your prayer life.

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