



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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LEARNING TO PLEAD WITH GOD

Charles Spurgeon wrote, *"It is the habit of faith, when she is praying, to use pleas. Mere prayer sayers, who do not pray at all, forget to argue with God; but those who would prevail bring forth their reasons and their strong arguments."* You might consider it unthinkable to "argue" with God. You might also believe it to be "presumptuous" to even think of "arguing" with God. Yet, when Charles Spurgeon writes of "arguing" with God, he is calling for believers to enter God's presence with reasons and arguments for why God should answer our prayer requests.

Wesley Duewel clearly defines "arguing" with God by writing, *"This holy argumentation with God is not done in a negative, complaining spirit. It is the expression not of a critical heart but of a heart burning with love for God, for His name, and for His glory. This holy debate with God is a passionate presentation to God of the many reasons why it will be in harmony with His nature, His righteous government, and the history of His holy intervention on behalf of His people."*

Pleading with God is entering God's presence with reasons and arguments that you present to God so that He will answer your prayers. Pleading with God is not saying, "Please, God, please. O Lord, please, please, please do this. I beg you. Please, Lord." It is not repetitiously saying the same thing to God in hopes that it will move God to answer. It is declaring and pleading careful and reasoned arguments why God should answer your requests. It is asking God to act on the basis of your pleas and then clinging to Him until He does

act. It is continually reminding God of your reasons and arguments until He answers.

Too many times we are "prayer sayers." As an evangelist, I have visited in numerous homes across the country. I have often heard parents say to their children, "Say your prayers before you go to bed." At other times, the family will have a prayer time before the children go to bed. The prayers that the children pray are those that have been passed down through the years. They simply repeat the same phrases that I was taught as a child and have heard others pray through the years.

Unfortunately, many believers never grow out of "saying prayers." We simply go through the motions when we pray. We repeat our well-worn clichés and call it "prayer." There is no burden. There is no pleading. It is a ritual that we go through because we are Christians. This is why much of our praying lacks power. This is why much of our praying lacks answers from God. **Powerful and effective intercession is pleading with God through arguments and reasons. Powerful and effective intercession flows out of the believer's commitment to argue or wrestle with God.**

We are in desperate need of "wrestlers" in the church. We need believers who will prepare their cases and go into the presence of the Lord with a determination to plead with the Lord until He answers. It is true that at times we need to be silent before the Lord. There are times when the believer needs to be still and silent before God (**Psalm 46:10**). This should be a part of every believer's

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prayer life. Yet, there are times when the believer needs to come before the Lord with a holy boldness, a pressing burden, and an unquenchable determination in order to plead with God. There are times when the believer must enter into God's presence and lay hold of God's willingness and power with faith and plead until God grants the answer. We must learn to develop the attitude and the persistence that the woman in the parable of the unjust judge had (**Luke 18:1-8**).

The spiritual poverty and powerlessness of the church can be attributed to our lack of pleading with God. Too many times we are content to go through the motions of prayer without a burden and without pleading with God. There are some prayer requests that God may answer immediately. Yet, there are going to be some that will take days, weeks, months, and even years of pleading with Him before an answer comes. Pleading with God is costly. It is painful. It involves the disciplines of patience and boldness. Yet, it is the path of blessing. It is the way to becoming a powerful and effective intercessor. It is a key to seeing lives transformed and experiencing revival. Will you make the commitment to be "wrestler" in prayer? Will you make the commitment to plead with God for others?

Why Should You Learn To Plead With God?

Pleading with God is an activity that you must learn to develop. It does result from having a pressing burden concerning a need or a person. Yet, you need to grow in your ability to plead with God. Why should you learn to do this? *The first reason that you should learn to plead with God is because He invites you to do this.* In **Isaiah 43:26**, God issues a challenge to His people. He declares, "Put me in remembrance, let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted." In **Isaiah 1:18**, God says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You have God's permission and invitation to plead your case and make an appeal in the courts of Heaven before your glorious and powerful Father. He wants you to come into His presence with your reasons and

arguments. He wants you to plead with Him on the basis of these reasons and arguments. God invites you to do this. It is the desire of His heart for you to come to Him and petition Him concerning your needs or the needs of others. You have an invitation from your Father to come and plead your case before Him.

Another reason for learning to plead with God is because God is especially moved by our pleas. The Bible indicates that God is especially moved by the cries of His people. God responds to the pleas of His people.

- **Genesis 2:23-25:** "No it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out to God; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them."
- **1 Samuel 7:9:** "Then Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him."
- **1 Chronicles 5:20:** "And they were helped against them, and the Hagrites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them, for they cried out to God in the battle, He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him."
- **Psalms 22:4-5:** "Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted You, and You delivered them. They cried to You and were delivered, they trusted in You, and were not ashamed."
- **Hebrews 5:7:** "Who (Jesus), in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear."

These verses, along with many others, teach that God is especially moved by the pleas of His people. When you plead with God, you are doing something that powerfully moves God. He hears and responds

to our pleadings. God powerfully responds to the desperate pleadings of His children.

A third reason why you need to learn to plead with God is because it is an important step in becoming a powerful and effective intercessor. The Bible declares that believers are priests in Jesus Christ (**Revelation 1:6, 5:10; 1 Peter 2:5, 9**). A priest had the responsibility of interceding for others. As priests in Jesus Christ, it is our responsibility to intercede for others. Believers are to be intercessors. It is true that some believers do have a particular calling and gifting in this area. Yet, all believers are to carry out the task of interceding for others (**Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:1-3**). Learning to plead with God is essential to interceding for people and all types of needs. You can "stand in the gap" for others more effectively as you learn to plead with God. God will use your pleading to carry out His will and to transform the lives of those for whom you pray.

Another reason that you should learn to plead with God is because it is an essential part of the Christian's prayer life. There are a variety of elements which should make up your prayer life. Variety in your prayer life will keep it healthy and strong. You need to have adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, silence, intercession, and listening in your prayer life. Yet, one of the essential elements that needs to be a part of your prayer life is pleading with God. Since intercession is your responsibility and an essential part of your prayer life, there must also be pleading with God. Every Christian needs to develop and present prayer arguments and reasons to God along with his or her requests. This will give life and power to your intercession. Intercession and pleading with God are interconnected.

You need to learn to plead with God because of its connection with faith and persistence. Faith and persistence are necessary for a powerful and effective prayer life (**Hebrews 11:6; Luke 18:1**). Pleading with God is connected to faith and persistence. Pleading with God goes hand-in-hand with faith and persistence. Faith anchors your pleading with God; persistence fuels your pleading. Where there is faith and persistence in prayer, there should be pleading with God (**Matthew 7:7-11**).

You should learn to plead because both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit plead with the

Father in their intercession. The Lord Jesus Christ pleads in His intercession before the Father without ceasing (**Hebrews 5:7; 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 7:25**). The Holy Spirit pleads in His intercession to the Father (**Romans 8:26-27**). As our examples in intercession, both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit plead in Their praying. Believers need to follow this same practice in their own intercession. By pleading with the Father, it will draw you into deeper fellowship and intimacy with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

A final reason for learning to plead with God is that it is a prerequisite to a fresh and powerful work of God. There must be pleading before the blessings and power of God are released. In the Bible, there were seven women who were barren. They were desperate and they cried out to God. They labored in prayer before God. God mercifully and powerfully granted each of them a child. These children eventually became prophets or deliverers of the people of God. Those women are:

- Sarah, who brought forth Isaac (**Genesis 11:30, 16:1, 18:1-15, 21:1-8**)
- Rebekah, who brought forth Esau and Jacob (**Genesis 25:21-26**)
- Rachel, who brought forth Joseph and Benjamin (**Genesis 29:31, 30:1, 22-24, 35:16-18**)
- Manoah's wife, who brought forth Samson (**Judges 13:2-24**)
- Ruth, who brought forth Obed (**Ruth 4:13**)
- Hannah, who brought forth Samuel (**1 Samuel 1:2-20**)
- Elizabeth, who brought forth John the Baptist (**Luke 1:7-18, 57**)

The principle that you need to see from these examples is that God's blessing and power comes through desperation and pleading. You cannot expect a fresh and powerful work of God if you are not willing to plead with Him for this work and power. Sinners will not be saved, believers will not be revived, the nations will not be evangelized until the church pleads with God and travails before Him in desperation. Pleading with God is necessary for experiencing a fresh and powerful work of God in our lives and the lives of those for whom we pray.

How Can You Plead With God?

You may be thinking, "How can I plead with God?" Pleading with God involves developing and bringing your prayer arguments and reasons before the Father. It calls for the preparation of a case to take to the Father in prayer. This case will consist of reasons and arguments why God should answer your prayer request. There are various ways that you can plead with God. The following are some suggestions that you can use to develop your prayer arguments and reasons. These suggestions are truths on which you can build your case that you are going to present to the Father. They are foundational principles for developing and presenting your case.

(1) **Remind God of His promises**-God has made many promises in His Word. God is a faithful God. He will fulfill His promises. Call on God to be faithful to His promises. Remind God of His promises over and over again. Challenge Him to be true to His Word (1 **Chronicles 17:23-25**; 2 **Chronicles 6:14-17**). In both of these texts, God had spoken. God had made promises. Both David and Solomon believed God and the promises that He had made. For this reason, both David and Solomon called on God to be true to His promises. Boldly and unashamedly bring God's promises to Him in prayer. Come before God with your needs and the promises that correspond to those needs. You are needy, empty, and spiritually bankrupt. His promises are full of blessing, mercy, grace, and power. Plead with God through the promises so that your need will be met, that your emptiness will be filled, and your spiritual bankruptcy will be turned into spiritual abundance. Reverently, lovingly, humbly, but boldly and persistently remind God of His promises when you are praying for your needs or the needs of others.

(2) **Recall God's past answers**-When praying for your needs or the needs of others, remind God of how He has answered in the past. God has answered you in the past. He has met your needs in the past. He has blessed and transformed others in the past through your praying. Call on Him to continue this. Because He is unchanging, plead with Him to continue hearing you, answering you,

and blessing you (**Malachi 3:6**). Remind Him that He has invested too much in you before to stop blessing you, hearing you, and answering you now. Moses reminded God that He had already invested too much in Israel to stop blessing them at that point (**Exodus 32:11-12**). David too reminded God of past answers and mercies (**Psalms 27:9, 71:17-18**). Through the Psalms, the writers are continually reminding God of His past answers and mercies toward His people (**Psalms 78, 85:1-7, 105, 106, 136**). Use God's past answers and mercies as a way to plead for present blessing and mercy.

(3) **Pray the Word of God**-In **Jeremiah 1:12**, the Word of God says, "Then the LORD said to me, You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word." God is ready to carry out what He has spoken. When praying for yourself and others, pray the Word of God. Develop your prayer requests from the Word of God. Take your needs or the needs of others and find passages in the Word of God that correspond to those needs. Plead the truths of these passages. The Word of God is a revelation of the heart and mind of God. The Word of God declares what God wills. When you pray the Word of God, you are praying exactly in line with the will of God. This causes your prayers to be powerful and effective (1 **John 5:14**). Call on God to be true to His Word. Plead with Him to work according to the truth that you are presenting to Him in prayer. The ancient art of praying the prayers of the Bible, turning Scripture passages into prayer arguments and reasons, is intercession in its purest form. Take the truths of God's Word and turn them into prayer requests for yourself and for others. Praying the Word of God also helps you when you do not know what to pray. The Word of God reveals what God wants to do in the lives of people. Even when you do not know how to pray, you can pray for yourself and others with confidence and certainty concerning the commands and desires of God. The Bible reveals those commands and desires. By praying the Word, you are asking God to enable people to keep His commands and carry out His desires. The Word of God is a powerful tool for pleading with God. Samuel Chadwick wrote, "I never take any book but the Bible into the secret place. It is my prayer book." Oswald Chambers wrote, "A change came when I learned to

use the Scriptures as a prayer book, and to turn what I read, especially in the Psalms, into prayer." The Word of God is a powerful tool in helping you formulate your arguments and reason for prayer.

(4) **Remind God of His character**-When praying, you need to use the attributes or characteristics of God as the basis of your arguments and reasons. As he prayed for Lot and his family, Abraham pleaded the justice and the righteousness of God (**Genesis 18:25**). In leading the people to pray, Nehemiah did the same thing (**Nehemiah 9:33**). In **Psalms 89**, Ethan six times makes God's faithfulness the basis of His plea. David pleaded the mercy of God (**Psalms 4:1, 27:7, 30:10, 86:6, 15-16**). Asaph pleaded God's mercy (**Psalms 79:8**). You can make the characteristics of God the basis of your pleas. When God's faithfulness is needed, remind God of the passages where He says He will be faithful and where He was faithful. As you pray for your needs and the needs of others, find the characteristics of God that apply to that need. Use His character as the basis of your pleas. Call on Him to show mercy, to display faithfulness, to prove His sovereignty, to be true to His righteous character. Charles Spurgeon writes, "It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah his attributes." Why does Spurgeon say this? He continues, "We shall find every attribute of God Most High to be, as it were, a great battering ram, with which we may open the gates of heaven." When the character of God is the basis of your pleas, you are calling on God to be true to His character. You are asking Him to be true to what He has revealed about Himself. This will make your pleas powerful and effective. Call on God to be consistent with His character.

(5) **Plead the blood of Jesus Christ** (**Exodus 12:5-23, Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 9:22, 10:19-23, 13:12, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 12:11**). The very mention of the blood of Jesus Christ is torment to the ears of Satan and a torture to His memory. The blood of Jesus, so precious to us, is a terrifying weapon against Satan. It shouts "defeat" in his ears. It shouts "doom" to his mind. Plead the blood of Jesus Christ because it is agony to Satan. Satan will want to flee from the sound of that prayer. We are covered by His blood,

sheltered by His blood, and made infinitely precious to God by Christ's blood. Satan cannot fight against the blood of Jesus Christ. He cannot stand before the blood of the Son of God. He must flee from its reminder. The blood of Christ is your battle cry. Use it to defeat Satan. Call on God to protect and sanctify believers through the blood of Christ. Plead that the lost will flee to Christ so that they will be cleansed, forgiven, and accepted through the power of Christ's blood. The blood of Christ has the power to break the chains of sin, to destroy the strongholds of Satan, and to deal with guilt.

(6) **Plead the sorrows and the needs of people**-Our God is a God of compassion and mercy. He has a tender heart. He feels all the suffering of the whole universe. He feels far more deeply than any human being can ever do. When you plead the sorrows and the needs of people, you are making a tremendously powerful plea to God. When you pray for others, talk to God about their sorrow and their needs. Declare to Him the sorrows that they are experiencing and the needs that they have. Jeremiah used this powerful plea as he interceded for the people. He pleads with God to look and see the sufferings (**Lamentations 2:20**). He calls on God to remember, look, and see (**Lamentations 5:1**). Throughout the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah lists in great detail for God all the sufferings of the people. He does not try to justify the people because He knows that they are deserving of all their judgments. Yet, he pleads on the basis of their sufferings. Nothing is more eloquent to God than the tears, heart-cries, and groanings of God's children as they identify with, detail for God, and plead for mercy concerning the sufferings and the needs of others. In your intercession, identify with, detail for God, and plead for mercy concerning the sufferings and the needs of others. Present these before your Father and plead with Him to act. Continually remind Him of these sufferings and needs.

(7) **Plead the honor and the glory of God's name**-The glory of God should be the prime motivation in all that you do (**1 Corinthians 10:31**). Yet, this should also be your primary motivation in intercession. Plead for those things that are going to

glorify God and exalt His name. Plead with God to save sinners because He will be glorified in this work. Plead with God to heal diseased bodies so that His name will be exalted. Call on Him to send revival so that people will know He is the great and mighty God of heaven and earth. Show how the prayer request that you are presenting is for the purpose of exalting God's name, power, and glory. Declare to Him how your prayer request will glorify Him. God responds when His name and glory are at stake. God saved Israel at the Red Sea for His name's sake (**Psalm 106:8**). Joshua pleaded for Israel by asking, "Then what will You do for Your great name (**Joshua 7:9**)?" David prayed for the sake of God's name (**2 Samuel 7:26**). Asaph prayed for God to help Israel for the glory of His name (**Psalm 79:9**). Jeremiah pleaded, "O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name's sake . . . Yet, You, O LORD, are in our midst and we are called by Your name, do not leave us (**Jeremiah 14:7, 9**). Later, Jeremiah cries out, "Do not abhor us, for Your name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of Your glory; remember, do not break Your covenant with us (**Jeremiah 14:20**). In intercession, plead for what is going to glorify God, exalt His name, and accomplish His purposes. The Lord Jesus Christ has taught us that our first concern in prayer is to pray for that which will exalt and bring glory to the name of God (**Matthew 6:9**). When you plead for that which will glorify God and exalt His name, the heart of God will be opened wide to your prayer request.

(8) Plead God's Relationships To You-God relates to you in a variety of ways. As you pray, plead for Him to carry out these roles in your life. He is your **Creator**. You are the work of His hands (**Genesis 2:7, Job 10:3, 8-9, 14:15**). One of the ways that you can use this role of God in prayer is to plead for God to change you. He is the One who made you. He is the One who can change you. You can also use this role of God to plead for healing. God made you the way the you are. He knows what makes the body work efficiently. When something goes wrong in our bodies, He knows what needs to be done to bring about healing. He created us; He knows how to "fix" us. God is your **Helper** (**Psalm 33:20, 40:17, 63:7**). He is your ever-present Help (**Psalm 46:1**).

Because He has been your Helper, plead with Him to continue doing this. Declare your helplessness and claim His help. Plead the fact that He has been your Helper (**Psalm 27:9**). God is your Redeemer (**Psalm 19:14; Luke 19:10**). He calls Himself your Redeemer (**Isaiah 41:14, 54:5**). Plead for Him to have compassion on you because He is your Redeemer (**Isaiah 54:8**). Call on Him to enable you to overcome your sins because He is the One who can deliver you from its power (**Matthew 1:21**). You belong to Him because of His redemptive work (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**). He is responsible for you; plead this truth with Him. God is your Father (**1 John 3:1-2**). Because He is your Father, you can plead the compassion of His Father's heart (**Psalm 103:13; Malachi 3:17**). Calling on God to act as you "Father" is a powerful plea. As your Creator, Helper, Redeemer, and Father, will He not help you, remember you, protect you, provide for you, and act in your behalf? God's role in His relationship to you are powerful truths to plead with Him to answer and to act.

(9) Plead The Insights and Assurances That He Gives You-As you read the Word of God and pray, God may give you particular insight into a situation or a need. He might give you insight on how to pray for a person or a situation. Check this insight with the Word of God and ask the Holy Spirit for confirmation. If it is scriptural and the Holy Spirit confirms it, begin to plead this insight that God has given you. God could also give you an assurance concerning a person or a situation. Ask the Holy Spirit to confirm this assurance and check it against the Word of God. Begin to plead this assurance with Him. Call on Him to act in accordance with the insight or the assurance.

(10) Plead With Tears-There are some burdens and needs that go beyond words. These burdens and needs drive us to tears. Do not ever discount the value of your tears to God. The Word of God says in **Psalm 58:6**, "You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?" Your tears are the language of the heart. Think of your tears as "liquid prayers." Charles Spurgeon wrote, "*Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession which will*

wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will 'weep' when I cannot plead, for Thou hearest the voice of my weeping."

David is a prime example of a believer pleading with God through his tears (**Psalm 31:9, 69:3**). Several Salvation Army officers in the last century asked General Booth, "How can we save the lost?" Booth stated simply, "Try tears (**Psalm 125:5-6**)."

Your tears are a powerful way to plead with God concerning a need or another person. God "hears" your tears. It causes Him to respond in power and wisdom.

(11) **Plead To God With Fasting**-Fasting can enable you to plead with God with intensity and a settled concentration on the burden or the need. Why does fasting help you when you plead with God? *First, fasting deepens your humility before God.* Ezra humbled himself with fasting (**Ezra 8:21**). David humbled himself with fasting when his prayers returned unanswered (**Psalm 35:13**). God blesses and gives grace to the humble (**1 Peter 5:5; James 4:10**). By fasting, you are praying out of a humility that God will bless and honor. *Second, fasting can deepen your hunger for God to work.* Spiritual hunger and fasting are reciprocal. Each deepens and the strengthens the other. When you fast, it causes you to have a deeper hunger for God to act and to answer your prayers. *Next, fasting strengthens your determination.* By fasting, you are showing God that you are determined to do whatever it takes to see Him answer your requests. You are declaring to Him that you will sacrifice anything and everything to see Him act and answer you. Andrew Murray writes, "**We are creatures of senses: fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.**" *Finally, fasting intensifies your prayer concentration.* Fasting enables you to give more uninterrupted concentration to pleading with God concerning a need or a person. It helps you master your wandering thoughts so that you can more clearly and intensely focus on your prayer requests. It permits the wind of the Spirit to blow away your mental and spiritual fog, freeing you, and cleansing you of much of the external world. Fasting is an

essential ingredient in pleading with God. It prepares your heart to plead more powerfully, believe more trustingly, and to hold on perseveringly until God answers.

Keys To Learning To Plead With God

There are certain steps that you can take to help you grow in the ability to plead with God. These steps will enable you to develop your prayer arguments and reasons that you can present to God. These steps are suggestions that you can use to discipline yourself to start pleading with God concerning the requests for which you are praying.

(1) *Ask yourself the following question: Why should God answer this prayer?* What reasons can you give God for answering your prayer? Examine your requests to see if they will glorify God. Look to see what characteristics of God are related to your prayer requests. Discover from the Word promises that speak to the need or the situation of the person for whom you are praying. From all this study, determine what reasons or arguments you will present to God for why He should answer your prayer request.

(2) *Cultivate an intimate relationship with God.* A believer needs to cultivate his or her relationship with God because of who God is. This is the primary relationship for pursuing a deeper relationship with Him. Yet, a by-product of cultivating your relationship with God is that it gives you greater strength in pleading with God. The more you know Him, the more that you can plead with Him. As God produces His heart in you and creates His desires in your heart, it will grant you more earnest and intense pleadings for needs and people.

(3) *Immerse yourself in the Word of God.* This is absolutely crucial for learning to plead with God. The Word of God is the revealed will of God. In the Word of God, you have God's commands and desires presented to you. Pleading with God means finding reasons and arguments to use in your praying which are in line with the will of God. The place where you are going to find what is in line with God's will is the Word of God. It reveals the

heart and the will of God. Also, the Word of God has the promises of God recorded in its pages. Pleading with God involves claiming the promises of God which relate to your need or the person for whom you are praying. Yet, how can you know what the promises of God are unless you are daily reading and studying the Word of God? If you are not saturating your life with its truth, how can you learn to develop reasons and arguments in line with His will to plead with God? In order to learn to plead with God, dig into the Word of God.

(4) *Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to plead with the Father.* The Holy Spirit pleads with the Father in His intercession (**Romans 8:26-27**). The Lord Jesus Christ is an intercessor who pled with the Father on the earth and is now continually pleading with Him at His right hand (**Hebrews 5:7, 7:25**). You are to follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 2:21**). God has determined to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:29**). Ask the Holy Spirit to make you into an intercessor like the Lord Jesus Christ. Call on Him to conform your prayer life to the prayer life of Jesus Christ.

(5) *Call on the Holy Spirit to create within you the compassion of Jesus Christ.* As you read through the gospels, you will see that Jesus is a compassionate Savior (**Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 18:27,33, 20:34**). Christ saw the needs and the hurts of people and was moved to act. As intercessors, we need the "eyes" of Christ. We need to see the needs and the hurts of people. This should move us to intercede with intensity and focus. Compassion is an essential for powerful and committed intercession.

(6) *Develop the discipline of fasting.* Fasting will intensify your ability to plead with God. Do not allow your flesh to deny you the privilege and opportunity to experience God's presence, power, and voice in a fresh and new way. Do not allow your flesh to keep you from offering powerful and intense intercession for yourself and for others. If you have never fasted, make the commitment to start. Start by skipping a meal and using that time to pray. If you have fasted, renew your

commitment to seek God in a fresh and intense way through fasting.

(7) *Practice journaling.* Through your journaling, you can look back and see how faithful God has been to you. You can see how God has answered prayers. You can see how God has led you in your praying. This will give you fresh faith and courage to plead for yourself and others.

Why Does It Take So Long For Some Prayers To Be Answered?

When I teach on intercession, I am often asked the question, "Why does it take so long for some prayers to be answered?" It seems that one has to plead with God for long periods of time before an answer comes. Some prayer requests are answered immediately. Yet, some answers come after a day, a week, a month, or even years of praying. Why do we have to plead with God for a period of time before we receive the answer to some prayer requests? Although I do not have all the answers, the following could be a reason or reasons why this happens:

- *God has to bring about the right circumstances in order to grant an answer.* God is a God of timing and purpose. He has to providentially work out the circumstances so that an answer can be granted. An example is the coming of Jesus Christ. Old Testament believers were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. They believed that He was coming. They trusted God to send Him. They longed for and prayed for the day when He would arrive. Yet, God had to create the right circumstances for His Son to come into the world (**Galatians 4:4**). When we are pleading with God, He is working and preparing the circumstances so that He can grant an answer to the prayer. This will take time.
- *God may be doing a work in your life.* Many times what God does in us as we pray and wait for Him is more important than what He does for us in answer to our prayers. The length of time that you have to plead with God may be the time that it takes for God to do His work in your life (**James 1:3-4**).

- *The "onion principle" may be a factor.* When you cut into one layer of an onion, you find another layer. When you cut through that layer, you find another layer. In order to cut through the onion to its core, you have to go through several layers. This illustrates what often takes place in your intercession for others, especially those who are lost or who are backsliding. Your intercession has to cut through layers of sin and hardness of heart. This often takes time. Before you get to the heart of a person's problem, you may have to deal with other sins and obstacles that have gained a foothold in the person's life. God is sometimes pleased to powerfully work in a person's life and deal with these things in a short period of time. Yet, it is often a process. A person does not develop a hardened heart overnight. A person does not get entangled in sin immediately. It happens over a period of time. Our intercession for them will begin to make changes and it will bear fruit over a period of time.
- *The "warfare principle" is often a factor.* When a person is lost or straying from God, Satan is powerfully at work in this person's life. This person is under his influence and can be used by him as a tool to carry out his cruel and infernal plans. He loves to wound and destroy; he has this person right where he wants him or her in order to inflict him or her as much as he can. When you begin to pray for this person to be freed from his grip and delivered from his or her lostness or backsliding, Satan is not going to give up without a fight. You are trying to take back someone on whom he has a powerful grip. This will require intense spiritual warfare. This will take time, persistence, and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- *Pleading with God over a period of time helps you understand what to pray for concerning a need or a period.* During a period of pleading, God will "refine" your request. Your request may not be exactly in line with His will. As you pray, God will teach you how to pray concerning this need or person. You learn to pray as you pray.

Dealing With The Hindrances To Revival: A Lack of Repentance

Time after time throughout the New Testament the call to repentance was sounded. The preaching of John the Baptist was dominated by this theme (**Matthew 3:2**). The Lord Jesus Christ called for repentance (**Matthew 4:17**). He repeatedly proclaimed its urgent necessity (**Luke 13:1-5**). According to the book of Acts, the church began with earnest calls to repentance and with severe warnings against those who would not repent (**Acts 2:38, 3:19**). At no time throughout the New Testament does this dominant theme disappear. Even the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to John on the isle of Patmos focused on the urgent necessity of repentance in five of the seven letters sent to the churches of Asia (**Revelation 2-3**). From beginning to end the plain demand of the New Testament is repentance (**Acts 17:30-31**).

The lifestyle of a believer is to be characterized by repentance. A believer must continue to repent throughout his or her life. A believer should not say, "I have repented," but, "I am repenting." Turning from sin and self toward Christ is and must be a continuing process. It is not enough to have once turned from sin and self to Jesus Christ. This turning is to be a day-by-day, year-after-year process of refusing to follow sin and self and deliberately following Jesus Christ.

Repentance is crucial for revival (**2 Chronicles 7:14**). Believers often grow complacent toward their sin and the necessity of repentance. Believers can fall into the trap of thinking that worship attendance and religious activity are a substitute for repentance (**Amos 5:21-23**). This complacency toward sin and the need for repentance stirs the righteous anger of our Father, dishonors Jesus Christ, and grieves the Holy Spirit. It spoils the testimony of believers. It causes the spiritual lives of believers to be stagnant and lifeless. It cuts off the power of God. In order for believers to experience a fresh and powerful work of God, there must be repentance--turning from sin and self in order to return to Jesus Christ.

In order to seek God for genuine revival, we need to pray for genuine repentance among His people. The following are some suggested prayer requests that you can use to plead with God for this.

As always, you need to begin with yourself and then pray for others. Pray that you would experience a fresh and deep repentance. Then plead for other believers to have the same experience.

- (1) Plead that God would grant believers a fresh and deep repentance (**Acts 5:29-31, 11:15-18**).
- (2) Pray that God would give believers a fresh understanding of His holiness (**Isaiah 6**).
- (3) Ask that God would deeply convict believers of their complacency toward sin (**Jeremiah 3:3, 6:15, 8:12**).
- (4) Plead that believers will repent because it is God's will and desire (**Acts 17:30-31**).
- (5) Pray that God will create a deep hunger for holiness in the lives of believers (**Hebrews 12:14**).
- (6) Plead that God will convict and lead believers to genuinely confess their sins and to turn from them on a daily basis (**1 John 1:9**).
- (7) Ask God to convict believers of their private sins and to lead them to forsake them (**Psalms 139:23-24**).
- (8) Plead that God will burden and move pastors to boldly and passionately preach on and call for repentance (**Matthew 3:2, 4:17**).
- (9) Pray that God will make sin bitter to the believers (**Jeremiah 2:19**).

Prayer Buster: Selfishness

Sometimes God does not answer our prayers because of the reason why we pray. If our reason for praying is selfish, God does not view Himself under any obligation to consider the prayer. No prayer powered by selfish motivation will move the heart of God. Praying with selfish motives is as fruitless as praying with unconfessed sin.

If we are honest, we have to admit that sometimes we pray for selfish reasons (**James 4:2-3**). Selfish praying is praying that puts your interests ahead of God's interests or the interests of others. It is praying that God will meet a need that benefits no one but yourself and may even harm others. It has a one-directional focus--for your own benefit without any regard to God or others. Selfishly-motivated praying never takes God's glory or the good of others into consideration. This is what makes it so selfish.

The word "lust" in **James 4:2-3** is a translation of the Greek word "hedone." The English derivative of the Greek word "hedone" is "hedonism." Hedonism is the belief that pleasure or happiness is the sole goal of life. Your prayer request is unacceptable when it is solely for your own pleasure or happiness without regard to God's glory or the good of others. When your prayer request is motivated solely for your own pleasure or happiness without regard for God's glory or the good of others, it has a fatal flaw. Praying for God to give you something for no greater purpose than your own pleasure is a sure way to have your prayers fall on deaf ears. Your motive must be higher than this if God is to answer your prayers. God is never pleased with selfish prayers.

How can you deal with the prayer buster of selfishness? The following are some suggestions on how to deal with selfishness in your prayer life:

(1) *Begin with a serious motivation check.* Do an honest appraisal of your motives. Ask yourself, "Is this a selfish prayer? Why am I praying for this?" If your prayers don't seem to be getting through to God, maybe the problem is the reason you offer them. Check your motives behind the request. Deal with any selfish motives that you discover.

(2) *Ask God to reveal to you if your motives are right.* Sometimes we think our prayers are properly motivated and God still does not answer. The reason may be that our mind is deceiving us concerning the motives (**Jeremiah 17:9**). We simply do not understand what is in our heart the way that God does. Our motivation may be buried deep within us, but that does not keep God from knowing it or revealing it to us (**Psalms 90:8; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Daniel 2:22; Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; Luke 8:17; Hebrews 4:13**). Ask God to reveal your motives concerning your prayer request. Call on Him to show you what is truly motivating your prayer request.

(3) *Do pray for yourself.* It is not wrong to pray for yourself. There are numerous examples of biblical characters who prayed for themselves: Moses (**Exodus 33:18**), Hannah (**1 Samuel 1:11**), David (**2 Samuel 24:10-25**), Solomon (**1 Kings 3:7-9**), Jabez (**1 Chronicles 4:10**), Jonah (**Jonah**

2:1-10), Paul (**Romans 1:10**), and Jesus (**Matthew 26:39-42**). Jesus teaches you to ask for what you need (**Matthew 7:7**). He also teaches you to pray, "Give us today our daily bread" (**Matthew 6:11**). Praying for your desires and needs is not selfish as long as your desires and needs are not selfish.

(4) *Ask God to conform your prayer request to His will (1 John 5:14).* When you feel that your prayer may be motivated by selfishness, ask God to conform your request to His will. Call on Him to teach you how to pray concerning the need or the situation. Be submissive to God when you pray. You should enter His presence with boldness and determination. Yet, these things must be balanced with submission and a willingness to change the way you pray when the Holy Spirit leads you to do this.

(5) *When you pray, keep the "glory factor" in mind.* Ask yourself, "Will what I ask of God bring glory to Him or to me?" Pray for those things that are going to glorify God. This is a prayer that God considers worthy. When Jesus Christ taught His people to pray, He taught us to pray first for the name and the kingdom of God (**Matthew 6:9-10**). Our prayers should be motivated for God's glory and for the advancement of His kingdom.

(6) *Pray that God will meet your needs so that you can minister to others and meet their needs.* God honors and blesses this type of praying.

Learning To Pray Through The Psalms: Psalm 2

This psalm is ascribed to David in **Acts 4:25**. It is a coronation psalm. David most likely penned this psalm at the time when Solomon was crowned king and began ruling over Israel. David wrote this prayer as Solomon began his rule. As one reads the psalm, it becomes apparent that the psalm looks forward to Jesus Christ (**Acts 4:25-27**). It refers to Jesus Christ and His coronation as Lord (**Psalm 24; Daniel 2; Acts 2:32-36**). This psalm declares that Christ is Lord. No opposition to Him and His kingdom can stand. He will reign and bring His enemies under submission either through His gospel or through His wrath. Men must make a commitment. They must either surrender to God's

appointed King and Lord, Jesus Christ, or face the consequences of eternal punishment (**Psalm 2:10-12**).

What can we learn about prayer from this psalm?

- *A part of our praying is declaring to the Lord the blasphemy of men.* The early church did this in the book of Acts (**4:25-27**). They did this in order to pray for boldness (**4:29-30**). You may be wondering, "Why should I tell God about the blasphemy of men? He already knows it. Wouldn't it offend Him if I talked with Him about the blasphemy of others?" The purpose of declaring the blasphemy of men to God is to call on Him to grant us boldness in our witness and our work for Him. As much as men blaspheme God, the church should be laboring and praying. Our witnessing and laboring for Christ's sake should match and excel their blasphemy. Declaring the blasphemy of men is a way to plead for greater boldness and power for your witness and lifestyle. You can also declare the blasphemy of men to God in order to plead for mercy. You could also do this to pray for God to silence them and deal with them. When people blaspheme God and His Word, we should not be discouraged by it or complacent toward it. We should carry it to God and ask Him to deal with those who blaspheme and call on Him to give us greater boldness.
- *We should declare our confidence in God (Psalm 2:4-9).* David declared that God would accomplish His purposes in spite of wicked men. God would enable His anointed to rule, whether this refers to Solomon or Jesus Christ. We should take our worries and concern to God. Yet, we also need to declare our confidence in God.
- *We should be bold and persistent in our praying for missionaries and the spread of the gospel around the world.* The Lord Jesus Christ has been promised that people from all races and tongues would be brought into a personal relationship with Him (**Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 53:10-12; Matthew 8:10-11; Revelation 7:9**). This should fuel our intercession for the labors of missionaries and the spread of the gospel.

The Beloved Unbeliever Network is a network of intercessors who pray for believers who have spouses that are not Christians. This network of intercessors pray daily for believers who are in this situation. These intercessors have been trained and are committed to praying for believers who find themselves in this type of marriage. If you would like to be added to this prayer list or if you know of someone who is in this situation and would like to place them on this prayer list, please contact Dr. Kevin Meador. Please provide the following information:

Name of the family members
Church affiliation
Any special requests

Any information that is submitted will be kept in strict confidence and the privacy of the individuals will be protected. Name codes will be given to each name submitted. The person sending in the name and myself will be the only ones who know the real name of the person being submitted.



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