

The Disciplined Intercessor

Are you tired of falling asleep when you pray? Do you have difficulty staying at the business of prayer, or find your mind wandering to a thousand other things? Are you still struggling to spend a daily time with God, let alone extended prayer times? Discover the power of “focused” prayer that begins with regular times of intimacy with God.



Focus on God

Intimacy with God is often a missing link in our prayer lives. Too frequently we rush into prayers and petitions without tuning our hearts, minds, and spirits to God himself. God has instructed us in the way into his presence in Psalm 100. Let us be careful to wait on the Lord. *“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, be thankful and bless His name.”*

Be Still Be Worshipful Be Thankful



Focus on You

The second part of our prayer time is personal in nature. It is a time to rend our hearts and not our garments. It is time to allow God to shine the searchlight of his Spirit into our hearts to *“see if there is any wicked way in me...”* We know that *“If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.”* Therefore we should spend significant time in personal examination before God.

Confess Sin Clothe Yourself Cast Burdens

Intimate Times With God

A Prayer Strategy

**Biblical Steps to
Intimacy With God**



by Richard W. LaFountain

Introduction

A number of years ago now I began to pray in earnest, "Lord teach me to pray!" Though many complimented me on my personal disciplines and my prayer life I was acutely aware that I was falling far short of what God expected for me. My prayer life was sporadic and not very exciting. I was busy in the fields of the Lord but my romance with my Creator was dying. "I was lukewarm" -- at least in prayer.

I began to search the Scriptures for teachings on prayer and in so doing I discovered some important and neglected elements of prayer in my life. For many years prayer to me had been "asking." Prayer was not a refreshing interlude with God -- It was work! As I examined my prayer life I found that I was predominantly a beggar before the throne of God. I kept slipping into asking, begging, and pleading with God and most often for my own needs. How could I prevail in prayer for others when I was so needy? Then God taught me that there was a way to deal with my needs and put them away so that I could pray for others.

As I walked through the Scriptures on prayer I discovered "undiscovered territories". There were things God teaches us about prayer that I never experienced, practiced, or saw evidenced in other believer's lives. I began to compile the truths about "how to pray" and came up with 12 steps of intercessory prayer. It was time to embark on a new journey into the adventure of prayer.

These lessons are the result of years of study and practice. My hope is that they will be to you what they have become to me - precious treasures of God.

The Struggle To Pray

Most of us, if we were honest about it, struggle with prayer. We don't pray enough, and we don't pray as we ought. Our lives are so busy from dawn to dark that there is little, if any, time for quiet moments alone with God. We trade our walk with God for a pot of porridge. We cheat ourselves out of the richest experiences God has to offer by not learning the art of intercessory prayer.

Prayer Is Not Easy

Intercessory prayer is not easy. It does not come naturally. It must be learned in the school of personal discipline. It will not come to us. We must pursue it. We must want it badly enough to sacrifice treasured activities to have it. For years I read material about the prayer lives of great men of God, how they prayed for many hours. They knew God. They enjoyed his presence. They walked with God. I wanted that!

A Desperate Prayer

A number of years ago now I began to pray in earnest, "Lord teach me to pray!" Though many complimented me on my personal disciplines and my prayer life I was acutely aware that I was falling far short of what God expected of me. My prayer life was sporadic and not very exciting. I was busy in the fields of the Lord but my romance with my Creator was dying. I was "lukewarm" -- at least in prayer. I prayed that prayer every day for two years. "Teach me to pray, Lord. I don't know how to pray. I know about prayer, but I don't pray as I ought. Please, teach me to pray."

Search the Scriptures

I began to search the Scriptures for teachings on prayer and in so doing I discovered some important and neglected elements of prayer in my life. For many years prayer to me had been "asking." Prayer was not a refreshing interlude with God -- It was work! As I examined my prayer life I found that I was predominantly a beggar before the throne of God. I kept slipping into asking, begging, and pleading with God and most often for my own needs. How could I prevail in prayer for others when I was so needy? Then God taught me that there was a way to deal with my needs and put them away so that I could pray for others.

New Discoveries

As I walked through the Scriptures on prayer I discovered "undiscovered territories". There were things God teaches us about prayer that I never experienced, practiced, or saw evidenced in other believer's lives. I began to compile the truths about "how to pray" and came up with 12 Steps of Intercessory Prayer. It was time to embark on a new journey into the adventure of prayer. I discovered there is a way to come into God's presence in such a way that sleepiness never overtakes you. I discovered a way to stay in the presence of God and enjoy it immensely. I found ways to wait on the Lord and listen to Him in which you pray what is on the heart of God, not what's on your heart. I have discovered how to pray the purposes of God, in the will of God the way God intended.

This Book

This book is the result of years of study, practice, and struggle in the art of prayer. It is born out of the struggle that all of us feel. My hope is that they will be to you what they have become to me - precious treasures of God. Is it perfect? No. Am I perfect in my prayer life? No. But I am far richer because of it. This booklet is designed to be a guide to intercessory prayer. It is a training tool. Use it on a regular basis to develop skills as a Biblical intercessor.

Personal Prayer Trainer

Welcome to my closet of prayer. I invite you to come into my private place of prayer. Please close the door behind you, (Jesus said to do so) and sit in silence as you watch me pray. I am not your guru or teacher. I am your prayer coach. This is a training course in intercessory prayer. It is a prayer strategy based on 12 Biblical Steps of Intercession. This intercessory prayer time is to be divided into two parts: Intimacy and then Intercession. It begins with your relationship to God in "Intimacy." Daniel says, "*They who know their God will be strong and do exploits.*" (Daniel 11:32b) Daniel knew God because he spent many disciplined hours alone with him.

This intimacy begins with the simple discipline of "being still" and grows from there. We start with learning to be quiet in God's presence and so, to hear His whispers. It is about intimacy, not getting things from God. It is about relationship, not about telling God all the world's needs. Begin small by learning the first step. It will take you awhile. It took me a good year to learn to be still. I still struggle with it. We are not used to being still or listening to God's whisper. It takes time. It takes patience, but you can learn it.

Begin with one step, the first step. Learn it well until you can discipline yourself to spend three minutes on it without distraction. A three-minute egg timer will become your best friend as you seek to discipline your mind and heart in prayer.

It is extremely important to spend adequate time in preparation for intercession since that is the discipline most often neglected or missing altogether in our times of intercession. It is important because God says it is.

Intimacy Before Intercession

“Are you known at the throne?” There is an interesting event in the 19th chapter of the book of Acts. Paul is preaching in Ephesus, and God is doing great wonders among the spiritist people. Two Jews take it on themselves to cast out demons like Paul, using the name of Jesus as their magic words. It didn’t work. Jesus name is not a magic word, it represents a relationship. Without the relationship, there is no power in using his name. So the demons jumped all over these clever fellows, but before doing so they left us with a clear spiritual insight. They said, “Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you?”

You see Jesus was known in heavenly places because of who he is. Even the demons knew him in his ministry as Son of David, who came to destroy them. He, Jesus, was mighty in prayer. Paul was a follower of Jesus, but he also developed intimacy with God in his closet of prayer, so that he was a familiar face before the throne of God, and evidently a terrifying spectacle to demons as well. Paul was known around the throne! Paul was known in spiritual realms as a friend of God, and therefore a force to be reckoned with. God fought for him. Are you known at the throne?

Jesus calls us to develop an intimate relationship with him and the Father by becoming frequent visitors before the throne. This is why Paul could say in Hebrews 4:12, “*Therefore, (since we are intimate with the Son of God) let us come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help in the time of need.*” The secret was not some pretended, forced, or ad-libbed boldness of “name-it and claim-it” before the throne, but a natural result of intimacy with God developed over long hours, days, months, and years of being a regular worshipper around the throne.

The lesson is clear. We are not magicians before the throne, magically calling things into existence by using the mighty name of Jesus, but we are “friends of God” known at the throne, and therefore feared by demons. William Cowper said it rightly in his work, Exhortation to Prayer, “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.”

Early in my ministry one of my favorite books on prayer was by the notable Baptist preacher, John R. Rice. One of his

memorable chapters was titled, “Prayer Is Asking.” One can easily be drawn into that kind of understanding of prayer but it is not quite true. Part of prayer is asking, but “*before the asking comes the basking.*” We need to learn to bask in the presence of God, to revel in God himself, to soak ourselves in the presence of the Almighty, to hide beneath his wing, to take refuge in his everlasting arms. God seeks such to worship him who would worship (pray) in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) Daniel reminds us that prayer is a relationship, “*but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*” (Daniel 11:32 KJV)

Worship comes before wishing, wanting, or wallowing. We are not beggars before the throne. We are sons. Sons who only know their Father as Santa Claus are not sons. True sons revel in the relationship of their loving Father. The “stuff” they get as an overflow from the relationship, not a manipulation of it. Prayer is not asking. Prayer is living in the presence of God. Prayer is loving God and letting ourselves be loved by Him. We must learn that prayer is a love relationship. If it is anything else it is no different than the prayers of all other religions – it becomes merely an attempt to manipulate God for our own benefit. Only when we see prayer as a relationship can we understand the exhortation, “*Pray without ceasing.*” (I Thessalonians 5:17)

As I entered the school of prayer with Jesus as my instructor his first words, and only words for a year or more were, “*Be still and know that I am God.*” (Psalm 46:10)

Time With God

We Are Creatures of Habit.

We get up every morning about the same time, we run through the same routines as though diligently memorized – Turn off the alarm, use to bathroom, turn on the coffee, take a shower, brush your teeth, shave, comb your hair, dress, sit down for a brief coffee and breakfast, and off to work.

Sound familiar? Perhaps your routine is somewhat different than mine, but it is a routine nonetheless. We all establish routines, or habits. It is the way we live. We generally swing a golf club the way we always have, we drive with the same idiosyncrasies we always did, we dress a certain way, comb our hair the same every day. We even have patterns for the way we brush our teeth!

We Are In a Rat Race.

In the western world we all fall into macro-habits, along with the rest of our nation. Generally, we let the world squeeze us into its mold. Conformity keeps us from standing out like sore thumbs. George Barna, of Barna Research Foundation, has found that by in large American Christians are not much different than the culture around them. They spend money the same, they watch the same amount of television, and the same programs. They have about the same stated values, incur about as much debt, read the same newspapers and magazines, and go to church 2.5 times per month. It is as though we were automatons, mass-produced clones of a post-industrial age, or cookie-cutter Christians stamped out in the same factory with little or no variety from the rest of the cheaply produced wares of an over-commercialized society.

Did You Ever Watch a Gerbil?

It is fascinating what a little rat can teach us! Gerbils are glorified rats, domesticated as house pets, shoved in cages, fed pellets, and basically stink up the house. Gerbils are known for their nocturnal hyper-activity. Every night, though they should know better by now, they climb aboard their spinning wheel and begin the race of a lifetime, chasing who-knows-what to get who-knows-where, just as fast as their little stinky feet can carry them. So what's the point?

Who knows but they all do it, and always have as far as we know, so the habit goes on and on generation after generation. Parents teach it to their children (monkey see monkey do), those children in turn pass it on to their offspring and so on it goes.

We are just like gerbils. We run the same gambit of spinning wheels that our ancestors did before us. We pattern ourselves to run the rat race, perhaps believing against hope that we will somehow run it faster than our predecessors and win some glorious prize. (Yummy! Another box of pellets!) What is the point anyway?

We see Christians falling into the same ruts with the rest of the world, running faster and faster, earning and spending more than their predecessors, and all the while asking themselves, “What am I doing anyway?” Heart attacks, strokes, nervous breakdowns, divorces, are just as prevalent among Christians as with their counterparts in the world. STOP THE WORLD I WANT TO GET OFF!

It Was Not Always This Way.

There was a time when Christians found the secret of a fulfilling life. Years ago saints on every continent knew the secret of joy and true satisfaction that comes from an intimate walk with God. There is a cost to that walk. It cannot be had while with hold hands with the world and run to the beat of their drums. God speaks to his children of every age and calls to them in quiet whispers, “*Be still and know that I am God.*” and again, “*In quietness and confidence would be your strength...*”

Unfortunately, as with the people of Israel, so it is with us. The epitaph is the same, – “*but you would not.*” Throughout the centuries God has had his called-out-ones, the Augustine's, the Francis of Assisi's, the AW Tozer's, who longing and heart's desire is to know God.

Choose Ye This Day

Solomon said it well for all of us, “*There is a way that appears right unto man but then end of it is the ways of death.*” The choice is yours. It is chosen every day of your life. We are not talking here in this booklet about a newfangled prayer fad, or some fantastic or novel prayer technique or discovery. We are talking about a decision to change our lifestyles, beginning with our prayer lifestyle. It is a decision to become “men and women apart,” ones who daunt to walk with God as Enoch, Moses, and Elijah. Men and women who consider it more important to be known at the throne in heavenly places than to be rich and famous in earthly values. Men and women who are willing to trade all the riches of Egypt to sit at the feet of the Master and know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

In this book we will talk much about time and stillness for that is the crisis of our age – so many time-saving technologies, but little time for the Savior. Our challenge is not so much of strategy as it is of priorities. We challenge you to change your life, by changing your life aspirations. We challenge you to change the way you do prayer, and begin living a life of prayer. We challenge you to sacrifice sacred time – minutes, hours, yes, even days and weeks, to the Savior’s call to come apart.

**Little with God
means
Little for God**

Intimacy Is Learned The Power of an Hour

Practice Makes Better

Any discipline takes practice. Focus is the essential ingredient of this prayer plan. It is not about talking at God but listening to him that brings about a new level of intimacy. Learn each step one at a time. The key is to start with the first step and learn to be silent first. Once you begin to master yourself you will find new freedom in prayer. The joy of God’s presence will surround you and inundate you.

Three Minute Prayer Meeting

This prayer strategy can be as short as three minutes. Take three minutes on each step. Take a full three minutes for each step and it will then take 18 minutes to complete all six steps. Eighteen minutes a day can change your prayer life forever. You will want to start each day with the intimacy steps and use that as your prayer pattern .

When you learn all of them begin small with one minute on each. From there grow strong and disciplined in your intercession. You may not be able to do this plan every day but while you are learning it make yourself do it every day for 4-6 weeks. That will build habit into your prayer time. Then use the plan several times a week for intense intercession.

Use it in your all-day prayer retreats or in extended times of fasting and prayer. Expand your exercise from 3 minutes to an hour on each step. You will find it easy then to do an all-night or all-day prayer retreat, or even a weekend or three-day retreat. The amazing result will be that you will end each prayer session longing for more!

The Three-Minute Timer



I suggest that you use a timer to keep yourself focused and to spend an equal amount of time on each. It takes work. Your mind is not used to focusing on one item. Your spirit is not disciplined and will want to hurry. Do not hurry! Spend time with God. That is what intercession is all about. It is not about asking many things from God. Spend time with God getting to know Him in unhurried preparation. Bathe yourself in prayer.

My mind is like a wild stallion, not wanting to be tamed, refusing to be ruled. It wanders wherever it wishes. It speeds ahead to the agenda of the day. It clamors for its own way. It refuses to be bridled. It won't be still. Peter tells us to bring it under control. *"Gird up the loins of your mind."* (1 Peter 1:13) Put a girdle on it! Fasten it down. Make it do what you order it to. Paul says, *"Bring every thought into the captivity of Christ."* (2 Cor. 10:5)

I have found that it is virtually impossible for my busy mind to be still. So, I found a simple tool that helps me discipline my mind. It is a 3-minute timer. I use the three-minute egg timer to keep myself focused and to spend a disciplined amount of time on each step of intercession. It is hard. It takes work. It demands time. Make yourself do it.

I begin with BE STILL and force myself to lay quietly on my face before God asking him to help me be obedient and be still. Then I push things out of my mind by saying "No" to them. I demand a complete 3 minutes of a quiet mind and heart before allowing myself to go on.

I punish (discipline) my mind for wandering by tacking on another 3-minutes when I perceive that my mind has not been quiet - that is, it has not been brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. "Be still" is a command, not a suggestion!

Sometimes it takes me five or six flips of the timer until my spirit and mind begin to slow down and obey. That's 18 minutes! I have had to spend as much as 36 minutes getting quiet in God's presence before moving on. Hurry is the enemy of prayer. Hurry and busy-ness is what has always kept you out of God's throne room. Satan knows that if he can get us worried about going somewhere, or doing some thing, we will not be where we should be to receive God's approval and blessing.

Your mind is not used to focusing on one item. Your spirit is not disciplined and will want to hurry. Do not hurry! It is Satan who is pushing you out of the presence of God. Corral that wild stallion! Make yourself spend time with God. That is what intercession is all about. It is not about asking many things from God. Spend time with God getting to know Him in unhurried preparation. God did not come to Adam in the cool of the day to check up on his progress or productivity in the garden of Eden. God came to spend time with his friend.

Your goal is not supplication. Your goal is Intimacy with God. It may be months before you get far enough along to walk through all 12 Steps in one sitting (kneeling). Your goal is not to do the steps. Your goal is to be intimate with the lover of your soul. Get familiar with the holy place. Get known before the throne. Spend time with God. Enoch "walked with God" and he was not because "God took him." God wanted fellowship with Enoch, not Enoch's productivity.

Intimate Patterns of Prayer

Tough Stuff

Becoming a praying person is not easy. The disciples soon discovered that prayer was work, and did not fit into their world-style of fun things to do. Yet they watched Jesus pray and something inside was stirred. They wanted to pray as Jesus prayed, so they began to ask, not once, but over and over, "Lord, teach us to pray."

An important lesson in Christian living is the realization that we are no different than the disciples or the people of Israel. We do the same things, have the same hang-ups, fail in our disciplines, are tempted and sin in the same ways, and struggle with the same life-long issues they struggled with.

Disciplines

Learning to pray is a basic Christian discipline, and most of us think we learn it but never succeed in it. Praying is not asking – that is only the tip of the iceberg. Real prayer is intimacy in one's relationship with God. It is prioritizing God in more than our rhetoric. It means having a time, a place, and a plan by which we spend rich luxurious amounts of time alone with God. It is the satisfaction of the heart-longing that David expressed for all God-seekers – *"as the deer pants for the waterbrooks, so my soul pants for you O God."* and *"One thing have I desired, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever and inquire in his temple."*

Secret of Prayer

True satisfaction in prayer will never come until we learn the secrets of intimacy. Intimacy means secret prayer, as Jesus expressed it to his disciples and as David announced it in Psalm 91:1, *"He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."* David was obsessed with "dwelling" with God, and being in secret places with Him. Until we discover that secret love-affair with God we will never pray effectively. Prayer is not asking God, but living with God and

loving God with all our inner being.

Prayer Habits

It is with this intimacy factor in mind that we have redefined our own prayer habits. The following guide to intimacy in prayer is our own journey into the depths of God's love. There is indeed a pattern for entering into God's presence. David found it and spoke of it. Psalm 24 and 100 serve as templates for effective intimacy in prayer.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that has clean hands and a pure heart... Open the gates (lift up your heads you gates)! And be lifted up you everlasting doors and the King of Glory will come in." (Ps 24:3-7)
"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." (Ps 100:4)

What Is the Principle?

Gates must be opened and entered into. There is a proper way to enter into the Holy of Holies and an improper way. Too often we quote Hebrews 4:16 *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace..."* as an excuse to barge into the presence of God without thought or preparation, but that is not the intent of the writer. There is a right way and a wrong way to come into his presence.

A Pattern For Intimate Prayer

A disciplined prayer life is to obey God rather than our own hurried inclinations, to take time to be holy, is to enter the presence of the living God with reverence and holy awe. This is God's appointed way, not our clever devising. Let His Word be your teacher on how enter into intimate prayer times with God. Make this your pattern, for it is God's pattern, and you will be blessed. Holy men of God, the monks, learned this secret a thousand years before us, and it is no less powerful today. Intimacy with God is not found in the marketplace but in the secret quiet place.

FOCUS ON GOD

Be Still

Psalms 46:10 "be still and know that I am God."

Isaiah 30:15 "in quietness and confidence would be your strength."

Be Worshipful - Behold His Beauty

Psalms 27:4 "to behold the beauty of the Lord."

Psalms 104:34 "My meditation of you will be sweet."

Be Thankful

Psalms 92:1 "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."

Psalms 100:4 "Enter his gates with thanksgiving... be thankful unto him."

FOCUS ON YOU

Confess our sins

Psalms 32:5 "I acknowledge my sin unto you, and my iniquity...I will confess my transgressions"

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins he is faithful...to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Cover our nakedness

Psalms 32:1 "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Revelation 3:18 "I counsel of you to gold... white raiment... that the shame of your nakedness does not appear."

Cast our burdens

Psalms 55:22 "Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you."

1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you."

Now that all this is done we may enter into the holy of holies. *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."* (Hebrews 10:22)

Beginning With Intimacy

Intimacy cannot be hurried. Hurry is the great thief of intimacy. Intimacy is about having a relationship with God. That relationship comes through Jesus Christ tearing down the walls of partition that divided us off from God. Paul says, "You who were far off are now made near." (Ephesians 2:14-17) Daniel said, *"They who know their God will be strong and do exploits."* (Daniel 11:32b) Daniel knew God because he spent many disciplined hours alone with him.

You cannot hurry these lessons. You can't learn it all in one day, one week, or even one month. Take your time. Stop being in such a hurry. There is no such thing as instant intimacy with God, or instantaneous transformation of your prayer habits. Habits are ugly things that stick to us. They were not made overnight nor will they be broken quickly. Learning prayer skills takes time. Give it some time. Just as a pregnancy normally takes nine months and you can't hurry it, so developing and intimate prayer life will take time. Give these first lessons on "Intimacy" nine months of day by day study and practice before you move on. It has taken me years and with all that I cannot say that I have mastered intimacy with God. It really takes a lifetime.

This intimacy begins with the simple discipline of "being still" and grows from there. We start with learning to be quiet in God's presence and so, to hear His whispers. It is about intimacy, not getting things from God. It is about relationship, not about telling God all the world's needs.

Begin small by learning the first step. It will take you awhile. It took me a good year to learn to be still. I still struggle with it. We are not used to being still or listening to God's whisper. It takes time. It takes patience, but you can learn it.

Begin with one step, the first step. Learn it well until you can discipline yourself to spend three minutes on it without distraction. A three-minute egg timer will become your best friend as you seek to discipline your mind and heart in prayer.

It is extremely important to spend adequate time in preparation for intercession since that is the discipline most often neglected or missing altogether in our times of intercession. It is important because God says it is.

A workbook is available to accompany this portion of your prayer training. Use the regularly. Feel free to make copies and work each exercise over and over. I still do them each time I go on a prayer retreat.

Step 1 – Be Still

Without a doubt the most difficult step in intercessory prayer is this one – keep silence, be still. Learn this step and you will transform your prayer life. Remember, your mind is like an undisciplined child running constantly and refusing to be dominated. It wants its own way. It is like a wild stallion that does not want to be tamed, bridled or ruled. It wanders wherever it wishes. It clamors for its own way. It speeds ahead to its own agenda. It refuses to be brought under control. But God says it must be bridled. Peter urges us to “*gird up the loins of your mind.*” (1 Peter 1:13) Paul says, “*Bring every thought into the captivity of Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 10:5)

A Secret

There is a secret that God reveals to his servants that is hidden from all other men. It is the secret of his presence. He delights to walk and talk with us but he will only do so in the “*Secret place of the Most High.*” Therefore David exalts the mystery of that secret retreat with God alone where God shadows over his own with his protective presence. Jesus said that the secret place for believers is the “*closet of prayer*” in Matthew 6:6. The Greek word translated in KJV is “*tameion*” which means a closet, secret or inner chamber, or a storehouse – thus “a closet.” He is very specific about it. “When you have entered into your “*tameion*” (secret chamber), shut the door...and pray in secret!” God longs to have that romantic secret chamber of interlude with each of us.

A Command (not a suggestion)

God has given his people express commands governing the turbulence of their own hearts and the peace that he offers and expects. None stands out so markedly as Isaiah 30:15 “*In quietness and confidence will be your strength and you would not...*” It declares that the Lord's purpose is for his people to return to Him to find quietness and confidence before Him. The indictment was that his people “WOULD NOT”, therefore they had no peace.

- Psalm 4:4 “*Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own*

heart upon your bed, and be still.”

- Psalm 46:10 “*Be still and know that I am thy God...*”
- Isaiah 30:15 “*In quietness and confidence will be your strength and you would not...*”
- Isaiah 32:17 “*The effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever.*”
- Isaiah 41:1 “*Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.*”
- I Kings 19:12 “*After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*”
- Ecclesiastes 3:7 “*A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*”
- Habakkuk 2:20 “*But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.*”
- Mark 4:39 “*And he arose and rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Peace be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*”
- Revelation 8:1 “*And there was silence in heaven for about the space of a half hour.*”

It is the mandate of God that we still ourselves before him in order to find his peace and hear his voice. So thus we have as the first and most important step in the believer's prayer life to still ourselves before the Lord.

Priority – “I set the Lord always before me...”

What is first in your life? David testified that he always, meaning every day, “*set the Lord before me.*” (Psalm 16:8) The word used here is the same used in Exodus 20:3 for the command “*to have (to place) no other Gods before Him.*” God is a jealous God and will not share his glory with another. (Exodus 34:14) There is room for only one on the Throne of Omnipotence. Either God, the Lord, is first and supreme and before all others or someone (maybe you?), or something else is first (your agenda, day-timer?) and on the throne. Jesus indicates the same priority theme in Matthew 6:33 when he commands that we “*Seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will fall in*

place.”

Listen – Hear His Voice

We live in a busy, noisy, tumultuous society. There is noise and constant demands for our attention every waking hour. There may not be any quiet Judean hillsides for us to retreat to daily for prayer. Therefore we must find an inner solitude in the Lord's presence.

Elijah, the mighty prevailing intercessor, learned this lesson when in weariness of the battle he fled into the wilderness. God sent first the wind and storm, then the earthquake and finally the fire. But God was not in them. After this there was “*a still small voice.*” God was found, not in the spectacular, but in the stillness.

Quiet Rest

Rest is important to God. The tireless Creator rested the seventh day from all his work. He commands us to do the same on the Lord's Day. He enforced the year of Jubilee for the land to rest. So too, he wants us to rest in Him. Get this message from Isaiah 40. “*The Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint, neither is He weary...*” But they that wait on the Lord will renew their strength. God doesn't need to rest, we do!

Isaiah 40:28-31

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding. 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Wait on the Lord

In the age of cell phones, microwaves, satellite TVs, high speed computers, and nano-second processing, we don't like to wait. But waiting on God is an important biblical principle. Most of us are in a constant frenetic hurry. We don't like to wait. We don't have

time to wait. Waiting is a waste of time. So we don't wait and we miss God's train of blessing. Waiting is part of the blessing of prayer. It requires that we put aside the rush of life and sit still and just wait. The point of prayer is not getting stuff from God. The point of prayer is getting God! Take skiing for example. The thrill of skiing is not in the arrival at the bottom of the hill, but in the joy of getting there – so it is with seeking God. The delight of prayer is not getting the answers, but being in the presence of the One who freely gives us all things.

- Psalms 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.
- Psalms 37:7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.
- Isaiah 30:18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him.

One Desire – To Behold His Beauty

David again is a wonderful example of one who learned about the secret place of stillness before God. He declares, “*One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.*” What is that one thing that consumed his desire? It was to behold the beauty of the Lord, then secondly to inquire in his temple. Beholding God's beauty begins in the quiet place of stillness. Then it blossoms into worship, the second step of our intercessory prayer strategy. One desire... what is yours?

Songs of Quietness:

Try singing these songs quietly, even mentally, to help quiet your heart and mind.

- There is a Quiet Place: There is a quiet place, far from the noise and pace, where God can soothe the troubled heart. Sheltered by tree and flower, and in that quiet hour, we find a new, new day.
- In the Garden: I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses, and the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me. And he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.
- Be Still My Soul: Be still my soul, the Lord is on they side. Bear patiently thy cross of grief or pain. Leave to thy God to order and provide. In every change he faithful will remain.

On no other step is it more important to begin and continue to use the 3-minute timer. It is the only way I know of to make myself be still before the throne.

The secret is in the discipline of laying aside everything else until your heart, mind and spirit are quiet before God. God says, “Be still!” The choice to obey him or not is up to you. Obedience begins here.

Even Heaven requires silence

Revelation 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

As you attempt to train yourself in these prayer disciplines remember that learning new habits takes time. Don't try to apply all of the steps at the same time. May I suggest that you discipline yourself in this step of silence only for at least 4 weeks, 10 minutes per day before going on to the next step.

Step 2 – Be Worshipful

“The Father seeks such to worship him.”

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” – John 4:23-24

To worship God is to seek his face, that is, to see the Lord in his beauty by meditating on Him and extolling (proclaiming) his worth. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and was forever changed (Is. 6:1-8). Jesus said that the Father is seeking worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. God desires for us to seek after him in steadfast worship beholding his beauty.

- *The fear (reverence and awe) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. – Proverbs 9:10*
- *And the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. – Daniel 11:32*
- *Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart. – Psalm 37:4*
- *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. – Psalm 27:4*
- *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: – 1 Peter 2:9*
- *But you are holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel. – Psalms 22:3*

Behold His Beauty

The worship part of intercession is to behold the beauty of the Lord. That means to take time to muse, meditate, and focus on who God is in all His splendor and glory, until the truth of His greatness fills us with awe, adoration, love. True worship is to quietly, deliberately look into the kaleidoscope of God's character, and then stand in awe of His matchless beauty. Remember that Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and was never the same. This was not a worship service in the Temple or Synagogue. It was private worship, “on-your-face-before-a-living-God” worship. It stirred the heart and cleansed the soul. David said his one overriding supreme desire was this. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. – Psalms 27:4

In Spirit and In Truth

Jesus authenticated private worship experience when he clarified for the woman at the well in Samaria that worship had nothing to do with temples made with hands. (John 4:23-24) Solomon too revealed that when at the dedication of the Great Temple in Jerusalem he confessed... “*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?*” (I Kings 8:27 and Stephen quotes him in Acts 7:48 “*Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet.*”)

Confined Worship

Too often we Christians make the mistake of confining our worship to the house of God. Worship is personal adoration expressed directly to God himself. It has little to do with formal services, and music. It has everything to do with loving God with all one's heart, mind, soul, strength and expressing that love emotionally and verbally. Jesus said, “*The Father seeks such to worship him.*” “Worship in spirit” is not referring to the Holy Spirit, but to the spirit of man – his emotions, his soul, his innermost being. Each day of our lives we as believers, the blood-bought redeemed ones, should seek to fervently worship God in our spirit.

Who Is He?

Would to God that we would learn the secret of His presence in learning to worship the Lord for who he is, not just for all the things He has done. I am afraid for all of us too often our praise is not real worship or

adoration but fumbling attempts to “do praise” so that we can get on with the real business interest of our prayer – the asking. True worship has nothing to do with getting. True worship is worship in truth, that is, worshipping God for who he truly is. Who is God? What is He like? God has revealed himself in His word. Worship is reviewing who he is according to that revelation. To know the Lord is to hold him is highest “awe,” and to stand amazed in his presence. True worship melts the heart before the heat of God's personal revelation. “No man can look on him and live.”

Worship is Action – Exalt the Lord!

Worship is not a quiet thing. It demands expression both verbally and physically. Angels and cherubim do it constantly before the throne. Worship is our invitation to join them.

Read the book of Revelation of Jesus Christ and you will find physical and verbal declarations of the worth and holiness of God. People fell down and worshiped. You cannot truly worship and be quiet or still. To exalt the Lord requires your personal investment. It involves all of you. Peter expresses the physical and dynamic declaration of God's worth when he says,

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” – 1 Peter 2:9

We are to SHOW FORTH his praises, not just say praises. The word “show forth” is one word in Greek, “*exaggello*” which literally is “to message forth” or to make known by praising, proclaiming, or celebration. “*Aggelos*” is angel or “messenger of God” who heralds God's glory. The Hebrew “*Shofar*,” or trumpet, introduced worship with a loud, long blast, so too, we are to trumpet God's praises loudly, just as angels do before the throne.

Psalms 66 verses 1-3 is worth our full attention as David instructs us in the art of worship. “Shout to God, Sing to God, Make his praise glorious, Say to God.” Psalm 68:4 continues the instruction, “Sing to God, Sing praise to His name, extol Him who rides on the clouds, rejoice before Him.”

To Know the Lord

Paul declared his goal in life was to “know the Lord in the power of his resurrection.” Daniel similarly praises those who truly know the Lord as ones who will do exploits. (Daniel 11:32) He who knows God by showing forth his praises will do valiantly. He will be victorious.

Worship With Scripture

Use the Scriptures to prime the pump of praise by reminding yourself of God’s greatness. Psalm 111, 112, 113, 117, 134, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150

Exalt His Holy Name(s)

(There are over 600 descriptive names of God and Christ)

1. Jehovah-tsidkenu = The Lord our Righteousness
2. Jehovah-shalom = The Lord our Peace
3. Jehovah-shammah = The Lord our Who is There Ever Present
4. Jehovah-m’kaddesh = The Lord our Sanctifier
5. Jehovah-jireh = The Lord our Provider
6. Jehovah-rohi = The Lord our Shepherd
7. Jehovah-nissi = The Lord our Banner
8. Jehovah-rophe = The Lord our Healer
9. Jehovah-saboath = Lord of Hosts

Make His Praise Glorious

Praise - Give Glory - Magnify - Worship
- Exalt/Extol - Sing - Ascribe - Bless -
Declare - Shout - Delight in - Honor -
Behold - Love - Clap - Lift up hands -
Bow down -

Lord, You are _____ (*attributes of God*)

Lord, You are my _____ (*Names of Jesus*)

Lord, Your name is _____ (Jehovah-)

Jehovah Jireh-Provider / Jehovah Nissi--
Banner / Jehovah Shalom-Peace /
Jehovah Tsidkenu-Righteousness /
Jehovah Shammah-Present / Jehovah
M’Kaddesh- Sanctifier / Jehovah Rophe-
Healer / Jehovah Rohi-Shepherd

Exalt His Name Together

Ancient of Days – Almighty – Alpha and
Omega – Amen – Anchor – Author – Balm –
Bread – Bridegroom – Brightness of glory –
Bright Morning Star – Captain – Cornerstone
– Counselor – Creator – Deliverer – Defense –
Door – Eternal God – Everlasting Father –
Fortress – First and Last – Immanuel – Hiding
Place – High Tower – Judge – King of kings –
King Eternal – Lamb of God – Lilly of the
Valley – Lord Mighty in Battle – Lion of
Judah – Life – Lifter of my head – Light –
Living Bread – Living Way – Lord Strong
Mighty – Love – Mediator – Mighty God –
Omnipotent – Only Potentate – Prince of Peace
– Potter – Redeemer – Refiner – Refuge –
Rock – Rose of Sharon – Savior – Shelter –
Shepherd – Shield – Sun of Righteous – Truth
– Victor – Vine – Way – Wonderful

Worship Verbs

Worship is not something we go to. It is something we do, or that we leave undone. It is not something done to us or for us by others. We often hear people remark about a special meeting - “*The worship was awesome!*” What does that mean? That elsewhere worship isn’t as good. Or good worship equals great musicians?

Worship is not about your harp and lyre.

It’s about your heart and desire!

1. Praise - (yadah) - to throw, shoot arrows, cast laud, praise
2. Give Glory - (yahab) -- make shine, to bring splendor, to ascribe worth,
3. Magnify - (gadal) - to cause to grow, to make great, powerful, to magnify
4. Worship - (shachah) - to bow down, prostrate oneself, to crouch in homage
5. Exalt/Extol - (ruwm) - to raise, to heave high, to lift up lofty, exalt above
6. Sing - (zamar) - to make music, to sing with voice, to play an instrument
7. Ascribe - (nathan) - to give, bestow, grant, permit, ascribe, employ, devote
8. Bless - (barak) - to kneel, to salute, to congratulate
9. Declare - (caphar) - tell of, to count, relate, to number, take account of, reckon
10. Shout - (ranan) - cry out, a loud shout of joy, a ringing cry (in joy, exultation)
11. Delight in - (anag) - be happy about, take exquisite pleasure in, make merry
12. Honor - (tiph'arah) - glory, renown, as attribute of God, make beautiful
13. Behold - (chazah) - (means to wash off one’s face) to see, perceive, look at
14. Love - (racham) - have tender affection, deep love
15. Clap - (taqa) - to give a blast, give a blow, to strike or applaud
16. Lift up hands - (nasa') - to raise, raise up high, to bear, hold high
17. Bow down - (kara) - curve over, sink down to one's knees

Practical Worship Strategies (Get into worship!)

1. Read Scripture that exalts Who He is. (Prime the pump with Scripture)
2. Sing songs to the Lord. (Sing out loud!)
3. Exalt His Names. (Magnify his names)
4. Remember His mighty works. (Think on, Meditate on)
5. Tell of His excellent greatness. (Rehearse it to Him)
6. Acknowledge His Sovereignty, Power, Wisdom, Control.
7. Physically express your worship and adoration. (lay prostrate, kneel)

God's Name In Prayer

Daniel said, *"The people that know their God will be strong and do exploits."* (Daniel 11:32) Solomon said, *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and they are safe."* (Proverbs 18:10) The Lord through Malachi commends those who *"think on His name."* Jesus taught to ask anything "in his name" and it will be done for us. Jesus' name is a powerful name. It is a *"name above every name"* so that *"at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God."* (Philippians 2:9-11)

Let us learn to exalt his name(s) in prayer.

- Lord, You are _____ (*attributes of God*) [adjectives]
- Lord, You are my _____ (*Names of God or Jesus*) [nouns]
- Lord, Your name is _____ and I exalt and worship You.

Ancient of Days	Deliverer	Lion of Judah	Redeemer
All Knowing	Defense	Life	Refiner
Almighty	Door of the Sheep	Lifter of my head	Refuge
Alpha and Omega	Eternal God	Light of life	Rock higher than I
Amen	Everlasting Father	Living Bread	Rose of Sharon
Anchor	Express Image	Living Way	Savior
Author	Fortress	Lord Strong Mighty	Scapegoat
Balm in Gilead	First and Last	Love	Shelter
Bishop of our souls	Immanuel	Lover of my soul	Shepherd
Branch	Holy One Of Israel	Mediator	Shield
Bread	Hiding Place	Mighty God	Sun of Righteous
Bridegroom	High Tower	Morning Star	Truth
Brightness of glory	Judge of all	Omnipotent	Victor
Bright Morning Star	King of kings	Only Potentate	Vine
Captain	King Eternal Invisible	Peace, our Prince of	Way
Cornerstone	Lamb of God	Peace	Wonderful
Counselor	Lilly of the Valley	Potter	
Creator	Lord Mighty in Battle	Prince of Life	

Jehovah Jireh/ Provider	Jehovah Shammah/ Present
Jehovah Nissi/ Banner	Jehovah M'Kaddesh/ Sanctifier
Jehovah Shalom/ Peace	Jehovah Rophe/ Healer
Jehovah Tsidkenu/ Righteousness	Jehovah Rohi/ Shepherd

Alpha and Omega Praise

Praise His name through the alphabet. Lift up and exalt God's names beginning with A and end with Z. (Alpha and Omega - 26 Praises) Do it together in the congregation. Attempt to give 3-5 on each letter. It is a wonderful experience, especially when people read their praise of Him from the Word. There are more than 600 names of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in Scripture. To review and rejoice in his name is to truly know him and make his splendor known. Believe me, you won't run out of praises.

A Ark, Alpha, Almighty God, Advocate, Author, Ancient of Days, Anchor
B Bread, Balm, Bright Morning Star, Breath, Beauty, Beginning, Best gift, Branch, Bride
C Creator, Captain, Comforter, Counselor
D Door, Defender, Deliverer, Daystar
E Everlasting Father, Everything to me, Earnest of our inheritance
F Faithful High Priest, Father, Friend of Sinners, Firstborn, Fairest of 10,000, First and Last
G God of Comfort, Great God, Good Shepherd, Giver, Gift, Guide, Glory-Lifter of my head
H Healer, Helper, Health, Holy One, Heir of all, High Priest, Hope of the ages
I Immanuel, Invisible, Immortal, I Am
J Judge, Jehovah-*, Jesus,
K King of Kings, King - *, Keeper
L Lover of my soul, Lord strong and mighty, Lord *, Lamb, Light Life, Lilly of Valley
M Maker, Master, Marvelous One, Mighty God, Mediator
N Never-failing God, Name above all names, Nest, New and living way
O Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent
P Protector, Provider, Physician, Prince of Peace, my Peace, Passover, Priest , Promise
Q Quickening One, Quickening Spirit, Quietness and my confidence
R Resurrection, Redeemer, Rock, Refuge, Righteous One, My Righteousness
S Savior, Sanctifier, Sun, Shield, Shade, Shepherd, Sure, Shelter, Source
T Teacher, Tower, Transformer, Truth
U Unmovable, Unspeakable Gift, Upholder of all things,
V Victor, Vine, Vision
W Water, Wonderful, Way, Wisdom, Worthy, Wing under which I trust
X Xcellent, Xaminer or my heart,
Y Yeshua, Yesterday, Today, Forever,
Z Zeal of Lord,

"Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

The Name Above All Names

There are so many names the Lord used of himself it is hardly possible to savor them all. Be careful not to just say his name, but to think on His name. Savoring it like a lozenge in your mouth, roll it over and over until you pull from it all it's wonderful savor. Just as a bee pulls the sweet nectar from the flower so should we drink deeply from the never-ending fountain of his name.

Keeper, Shade Upon Right Hand, Shield, Defender, Refuge, Fortress, High Tower, Ancient of Days, Creator, Friend, Glory and Lifter of my head, King of Glory, Lord Strong and Mighty, Lord of Hosts, Very Present Help in Trouble, Well of Salvation, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Altogether Lovely, Balm of Gilead, Branch, Lilly of the Valley, Chiefest Among Ten Thousand, Defense, Deliverer, Desire of all Nations, Despised by the People, Diadem of Beauty, Fountain of Life, Friend that Sticketh Closer than a Brother, Refiner, Guide Even Unto Death, Helper of the Fatherless, Hiding Place, One Who Inhabits Eternity, Refiner's Fire, Refuge, Refuge in Times of Trouble, Refuge for the Oppressed, Refuge from the Storm, Reproach of Men, Resting Place, Reward for the Righteous, Righteous Branch, River of Water in a Dry Place, Rock that is Higher than I, Rock of My Refuge, Rod, Rose of Sharon, Scepter of Israel, Star out of Jacob, My Stay, Stone which the Builders Refused, Strength of My Life, Strong Tower from the Enemy, Sun of Righteousness, and many more.

Three Questions to Answer As You Worship:

- Who Is He?
- How Great Is He?
- What Is His Wonderful Name?

Step 3 – Be Thankful

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving.”

Thanksgiving naturally follows confession and forgiveness! We did not put it in third place right next to worship lest we be tempted to think that worship and thanksgiving are the same thing. They are not. Thanksgiving is a distinct act of the will. It recognizes the hand of God and is thankful. It chooses to give God credit for what he has done, and what he has promised, while worship praises God for who He is.

In Everything Give Thanks

Thanks giving is to be as much a part of the believer's life as breathing. We are exhorted to live in thankfulness to God, and to exalt him with continual expressions of thanks regardless of our present circumstances. "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (2 Thessalonians 5:18)

In prayer we are exhorted to give thanks profusely for the goodness of the Lord, for all his benefits, for his mercies, for his faithfulness, for his steadfast love, for loads of blessings. Psalm 100 is an excellent guide for entering the presence of God. "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise: Be thankful unto him, and bless His name." Unthankfulness and silence curses God's name. It brings him shame.

Ingratitude

It was Israel's ingratitude of heart, the murmuring, the complaining, the grumbling, that brought on the wrath of God. It was not that God had not blessed. He had over and over again! It is that men soon forget the goodness of the Lord. We are quick to forget his answers to our prayers, His mercies in our troubles, His healings when we are sick, His forgiveness when we fail, His provisions in our need. Well did the psalmist groan in Psalm 107, "*O Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good...Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*"

The Psalms

The Psalms are filled with expressions of thanks to God on every side. Oh, may our lives, our lips, be continual psalms of thanksgiving! The apostle Paul commands the same principle in the New Testament, regardless of the circumstances we are to be thankful and think on the good things the Lord has done. "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep you hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Good Mental Health

Good mental health begins with a thankful attitude of heart. *"A merry heart does good like medicine...He that has a merry heart has a continual feast."* (Proverbs 15:13 / 17:22) Depression and discouragement are the inability to see the goodness of God around you. David frequently expressed his depression, *"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living."* (Psalm 27:13) The eyes of faith see the goodness of God even in the midst of adversity. God's purposes, plans, and provisions are always good! Remember, He is working it out. Be thankful while He works it out. (Romans 8:28 and Jeremiah 29:11)

Forget Not All His Benefits

Forgetfulness of God's multiplied blessings is sin. Forgetting or neglecting to give Him thanks is the sin of ingratitude - at least it is taking God for granted. D.L. Moody in commenting on Psalm 103 said, *"I can't remember all his benefits and blessings, but I dare not forget all of them either."* Thanksgiving is remembering God's good gifts and giving Him the credit due his name.

- Psalm 103:2-5 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."
- Psalm 68:19 "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits..."
- James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Thanksgiving Is a Sacrifice to God

Hebrews 13:15 points out that thanksgiving is a sacrifice to God. A sacrifice of our lips, that is to be offered up to God continually. Thanksgiving is not easy. It is tough to be thankful and express thanks from the heart for everything.

Wouldn't prayer be wonderfully transformed if we would offer 10 sacrifices of thanksgiving for every request we make of God?

Thank You Lord!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Practical Disciplines

1. Thank God for His Creation, your own body (Psalm 139:14)
2. Thank God for His provisions. For everything you have. List each thing for which you are thankful.
3. Thank God for people He has put into your life. Name them by name and what you are thankful for.
4. Thank God for little things. Start with the smallest things you can think of for which you are thankful. From there work toward the bigger things he has done. Never start with the big lest you despise the small. Do not despise the day of small things. (Zech. 4:10)
5. Thank God for hard things. "In everything give thanks...for this is the will of God..." Thank God for the trials and adversities that come to make us strong. They are what make us lean on Him. So thank Him!
6. Thank God for everything. Keep a notebook handy in which you write down your thanksgiving list. It helps!

Use these Psalms to guide your thanksgiving. Pray the Psalms. Mark them as "Thanksgiving" in your Bible: Psalm 103; 104; 105; 107; 111; 118; 124; 126; 136; 139

Be Thankful Unto Him

- His mercies new every morn
- His benefits
- His blessings
- His way and will is perfect
- Good, bad, and the ugly

"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." – 1Thess 5:18

He Has Made

- Earth by his great power
- Me, I am fearfully and wonderfully made
- All things small an great
- All things richly to enjoy
- This day
- Good and evil

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?" – Ecclesiastes 7:13

Step 4 – Confess Sin

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9

John, the beloved disciple, warns us against an attitude of innocence before a holy God. To say that we have nothing to confess to God is to call Him a liar, and to practice self-deception before our Maker. David says: *"Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."* (Psalm 51:5) And Isaiah adds to his own unworthiness before a holy God when he says: *"All of our righteousnesses (that is, our best efforts) are as filthy rags."* (Isaiah 64:6) Most of us misread that passage and think that God means *"all of our unrighteousnesses."* But it is all our best effort at right living that are still as filthy rags. Even if we could keep all the law and stumble in only one small point we would be guilty of all.

Woe Is Me!

Isaiah, a man filled with the Spirit, a prophet of God, a man above reproach, is a good example of this truth. In Isaiah 6 he first sees the Lord in all his beauty, high and lifted up, and glorified. The sight was so awesome that the just and righteous Isaiah fell on His face before God with an acute awareness of his own sinful nature. He was not exaggerating. He was not bemoaning the sinfulness of other people. He saw himself in the light of God's holiness and cried *"Woe is me I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips."* (Isaiah 6:1-5)

We are not just to come into God's presence presumptuously, but humbly (2 Chronicles 7:14) contritely, with a sincere perspective on our own nature. We need a vision of ourselves, our true fallen nature, our minds which are unclean, and of which God knows every passing thought. (Psalm 139:1-5)

Bankruptcy

Until we recognize our own state of bankruptcy before a holy God we cannot truly lean upon His Righteousness, without which no man will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14) We would instead come into his presence as the Pharisee, proud, bragging of his kept laws, righteous deeds, his right to gain the Father's favor. We need to see ourselves as destitute, and totally depraved, without the righteousness of Christ. We have nothing of which to boast. We, are as the rich church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. We need to see ourselves as God sees us. *"Lukewarm...wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."*

A.W. Tozer says:

"We need to admit...the shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, the worldliness of our lives, our fleshly fallen nature that lives on, yet unjudged within us, uncrucified and unrepudiated, and the hyphenated sins of the human spirit, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, self-indulgence, and a host of other self-sins. They are not something we do, they are something we are..."
The Pursuit of God

REGARDING INIQUITY IN MY HEART

"If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18

To regard iniquity means to leave it alone, to tolerate it, to know it is there and do nothing about it. It is to hide it, to cover it by excuses, to consider it unimportant, to ignore its dangers.

God considers any iniquity to be an abomination. An abomination is a horrible disgusting thing. There are no "good guy" iniquities, no little white lies, no insignificant rebellions of the heart! God calls rebellion in any form "as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry." (1 Samuel 15:23) God considers sin as sin and all equally appalling to His holiness. Sin in our heart is to the Lord as festering sores, and maggots in his holy offerings – slimy, crawling, slithering, disgusting, maggots defiling the whole! (Isaiah 1:6)

Daniel was conscious of the subtle ways in which sin surrounds us and creeps into our thoughts, actions, and in-actions. In his exemplary prayer in Daniel 9 he identifies nine faces of sin.

WE HAVE ...

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Sinned | v 5 | Missed the mark, fallen short |
| 2. Committed iniquity | v 5 | Deliberate conscious sin |
| 3. Done wickedly | v 5 | Life-style habitual sin |
| 4. Rebelled | v 5/9 | Said no to God! |
| 5. Not hearkened | v 6 | Closed our ears, ignored |
| 6. Not obeyed voice | v 10 | Grieved the Holy Spirit |
| 7. Transgressed law | v 11 | Legal term, to know law and disobey |
| 8. Departed from God | v 11 | Backslidden, wandered away |
| 9. Made not prayer | v 13 | Sin of prayerlessness |

DEAL WITH SIN !

Jesus emphasized the need to deal with sin each time he spoke of prayer. In the Lord's prayer he deals heavily with the need to deal severely with sin. That is, in fact, the primary lesson of the Lord's Prayer. Immediately after citing it he pointed out the need to forgive as well as ask for forgiveness. In Matthew 5:23-26 Jesus further deals with sin in prayer by saying that when we come to God's altar with an offering we must first do something about broken relationships before we pray and offer praise!!! An attempt at reconciliation must be made before our prayers will be heard. I Peter 3:7 includes the marital relationship as being a hindering factor in prayer.

CONFESSION OF SIN

A man that truly enters into the presence of God cannot but help to see himself as unclean. Even the Scripture admits that *"all of our good deeds are as filthy rags."* So was the feeling of Isaiah before the throne in Isaiah 6, and of Daniel in chapter 9. The holiness of God cannot tolerate the presence of sin! We are exhorted to confess our sins to God (1 John 1:8-9), and even admit our faults one to another (James 5:16) so as to pray effectively and fervently and be healed.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR SIN

- Conviction is seeing sin as exceedingly sinful.
- Repentance is "Agreeing with God about my sin," and turning from it.
- Confession is exposing it to God & asking Him to forgive and cleanse.

We cannot do penance for our sins, it would do no good. We cannot pay the penalty of our sins. The penalty or "wage of sin is death." Therefore God has provided a better way. We lay our sins on Jesus.

Isaiah 53 is a magnificent passage that describes the atonement of Jesus Christ for sins. Jesus paid it all on the cross. That is why he could say, "It is finished." Verse five says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."* Verse six goes on, *"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all."* Verse twelve goes even further, *"He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*

There is nothing more for me to do but lay my sins on Jesus. That is why the thief on the cross could be saved. He could not do penance. He could not make restitution for what he had done. He could not even prove his sincerity. He simply laid his sin on Jesus and said, "Have mercy on me." That is what Jesus came to do. *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*

Lay your sins on Jesus - he is your sin-bearer. Then rejoice in what God says he has done with your sins. Confession is not commiserating or grieving over your fallen nature, your secret thoughts, or your sins of commission or omission, but asking and receiving forgiveness and the covering of the blood of Jesus. Do not leave the altar of confession without appropriating the provisions of the cross!. Be forgiven and give thanks.

What Happened To Our Sins?

1. They were paid in full - Romans 5:11 / Isaiah 53:6
2. They were pardoned - 1 John 1:9
3. They were laid on him - Isaiah 53:6
4. They were washed whiter than snow - Isaiah 1:18
5. They were covered - Psalm 32:1
6. They were cleansed by blood of Jesus - Hebrews 9:22/ 10:4
7. They were blotted out - Isaiah 44:22
8. They were removed as far as east from west - Psalm 103:12
9. They were cast in depths of sea - Micah 7:19
10. They were forever forgotten - Jeremiah 31:34

**Read Psalm 51 and Psalm 139
as part of your confession of sin.**

It is Well

My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul.

Confess Sin

(Do spiritual inventory, open heart surgery)

Words - have you spoken evil of anyone, criticized, sharp words

Attitudes - complaining spirit, depressed, grouchy, know-it-all

Thoughts - evil desires, lusts, doubts, fears, hatred, bitterness

Actions - broken God's laws, trespassed on forbidden ground

Step 5 – Clothe Yourself

What is the first thing you do after taking a bath? Get dressed! I am so glad provision has been made for our nakedness! God commands us to “Put on”, as elect of God. We are commanded to “put on the Lord Jesus,” “Put on the new man,” and to “Put on the whole armor of God.” So put it on! That means dress in it. Reckon it to be so before the throne. Stand in Him complete.

Abraham believed God and it was “imputed” to him as righteousness. That word imputed means it was credited to his account. Though he was bankrupt himself, God applied it to his account because of his faith. Believe God and apply His provision for your nakedness.

Zechariah 3:1-3

The Old Testament book of Zechariah, chapter three contains a wonderful example of the need to put on, or to reckon ourselves clothed in the righteousness of God, and in the armor of the Lord. Joshua, the high priest, was standing before the Lord and Satan was at his right hand accusing him before the throne of God. Everything Satan brought against him was true except for one thing - God said, “I forgave him. I clothed him. Leave him alone!” Therefore God commanded the angel of the Lord to take off Joshua’s dirty tattered garments and give him a robe of pure white, a turban on his head, and a scepter in his hand. Then God looks at him and says, “Is not this the brand plucked out of the fire?”

There Are Two Parts to Reckoning:

1. Principle of Position - seeing yourself in heavenly places as God sees you.
2. Principle of Practice - exercising authority in Christ in heavenly places

Principle of Position

There is a “Principle of Position” that we all need to learn. It is the principle that though we all fall far short of the glory of God, God himself has made provision for us. His provision is that we can put on Christ. We wear his righteousness, his white robe, his crown, his authority. As God sees us in heaven he sees us through his perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ his Son. We are brands plucked out of the fire. Reckon it to be so! See yourself as God sees you... “*and you are complete in him.*”(Colossians 2:10)

“*To Reckon*” is to appropriate God’s invisible truth as our visible reality.

“*To Believe*” is to see the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

*Faith applies to our hearts
the heavenly realities that God already sees.*

- Put on the Lord Jesus Christ
- Put on His Righteousness
- Put on the Whole Armor of God

Reckon it!

“*To reckon*” is an old biblical term for calculate, or add it up. We use it today to refer to balancing a checkbook, or to reconcile our accounting to the bank’s statement. Just like that we are to reckon God’s statements about us to be true.

- Reckon yourself to be dead to sin and alive to God.
- Reckon yourself to be seated with Christ in heavenly places.
- Reckon yourself to be clothed in his righteousness.

Principle of Practice – Using Your Authority

How do we exercise our God-given authority in Christ? How do we address the devil in our prayers? (We certainly don't pray to him.)

Weapons

God has clearly given us "Weapons of our Warfare" for the pulling down of strongholds. Our weapons (the word literally is "strategies") *are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God, and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6)

Words

The sword of the Spirit, is the Word of God. God's word is that which we use as our offense. It cuts, penetrates, convicts, declares, exposes, and casts out the enemies of God. Jesus said, "*All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" That is why whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven. (Matt. 16:19, 18:18) That authority is in his word, his ultimate authoritative command. We simply wield the sword. Just point it in the right direction.

Prayers

Our prayers, offered up to God in Jesus name, have powerful effects in spiritual realms.

- "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man has great effect.*" – James 5:16
- "*Be strong*" or be bold, boldfaced, courageous, aggressive, un-intimidated - Eph 6:10
- "*Lay your hand upon the throne*" - Exodus 17:16
- "*Build a hedge of protection*" - Ezekiel 22:30
- "*Come boldly to the throne of grace*" - Hebrews 4:16

SPIRITUAL WARFARE TOOLS

Like it or not, we are involved in this wrestling match against spiritual forces. Since we cannot get away from it we'd better put on God's armor and do as he did to win the day.

<u>Be strong</u> in the Lord!	Ephesians 6:10
<u>Put on</u> the armor of God	Ephesians 6:11-18
<u>Bind</u> the enemy	Matthew 18:18-20
<u>Resist</u> the devil	James 4:7
<u>Claim</u> the blood	Revelation 12:11
<u>Declare</u> loosing of the captives	Luke 4:18
<u>Pull down</u> strongholds	II Corinthians. 10:3-5
<u>Put a hedge</u> of protection	Ezekiel 22:30
<u>Command</u> him to leave	Matthew 10:1
<u>Rebuke</u> him in Jesus name	Matthew 17:18

It is only when we stand in our own righteousness that we should be afraid to stand before the enemy, for our righteousnesses are as "filthy rags" but the righteousness of Christ is called the armor of God.

Identify Enemy Strongholds

TRIALS Attacked & Sieges	TORMENTS Oppression of the enemy	TRAGEDIES Bondage to the enemy
<u>People</u> - enemies persecutors, blasphemers, interferes <u>Finances</u> - devouring worm, waster, losses <u>Family</u> - disintegration, scatterer, anger <u>Marriage</u> - destroyer, divorce, separation <u>Problems</u> - flood of bad events <u>Physical</u> - health attacks "buffeting"	<u>Depression</u> - prolonged emotional attacks <u>Physical</u> - spirit of infirmity, hypochondriac <u>Fears</u> - unfounded fears, anxieties, panics <u>Anger</u> - hatred, bitterness, temper, rage, violence <u>Moral</u> - repeated failures, obsessive temptations <u>Backslider</u> - apostate deliberate willful turning away	<u>Drugs</u> - under the power of substances, alcohol, pills, etc. <u>Sexual deviations</u> - addictions, porno, homosexuality, immorality <u>Abusive behavior</u> - destructive, assaults, language <u>Insanity</u> - uncontrollable mind, psychosis, voices, visions, etc. <u>Occult involvement</u> - consulting psychics, palm readers etc <u>Cults</u> - blinded to the truth, choose to believe a lie

Step 6 – Cast Your Care

Ps. 55:22 Cast your burden on the Lord...He shall sustain you.

Phil. 4:6 In everything...let your requests be made known unto God.

1 Pet.5:7 Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Praying For Yourself

Often those who are the best intercessors carry heavy burdens for others in the hour of prayer, but they forget that they too have personal burdens that need to be laid at the feet of Jesus. Before we can appropriately carry the burdens of others we need to put down our own lest we be constantly returning to God to make petitions for ourselves. We should examine our hearts and “wring out” the cares and concerns on our own hearts. God delights to hear it.

Unpacked Baggage

We cannot properly intercede for others until we have cleared away the baggage of personal concerns, needs, and cares. We need to wring out our burdened hearts until all our care is laid before Him. We must find a resting place where we can lay down our burdens, in order to bear other’s burdens in prayer. Hearts that are "overloaded" with care will be distracted in prayer and made ineffective in their intercession.

In Luke 21:34, Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the danger of three distracting pitfalls:

1. Over-abundance (surfeiting, over-spending, over-charging, too many possessions)
2. Over-indulgence (drunkenness, lover of pleasures, over-eating, over-playing)
3. Over-load (cares, burdens, worries, fears of this life)

Take Your Burden To The Lord

The most deceptive and innocent looking is the "overload...with cares of this life." We cannot escape the cares of normal living, but we can UNLOAD the OVERLOAD. Jesus concludes the issue in verse 36 by saying, "Therefore watch and pray always..."

Leave It There!

The solution to overloaded cares is to pray. That means to bring those excess burdens, cares, concerns, problems, worries, fears, anxieties, and troubles TO THE LORD and leave them there! Too often we take these concerns to the Lord, and walk away just as burdened as before we prayed. There is no "leaving it there."

Cast, Roll, Dump It!

David used an interesting word for "leaving it there." "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Psalm 55:22 The word "CAST" is the key. It literally means... ROLL... DUMP... UNLOAD... as one who is carrying a backpack of heavy equipment allows it to slide from his shoulders to another who is stronger, more able to carry the load.

He Cares for You!

Peter’s words are a great reminder of our love relationship with Christ. He delights when we tell him our innermost secrets and the desires of our hearts. God longs for us to be brave, bold, and unabashed before the throne. We are his children, so ask! Often the Holy Spirit waits on our cry for help. I often hear him say, “What do you want me to do? Be very specific!” That specificity is to expose to the Lord the deep desire of my heart.

*You cannot carry your own burdens
and the burdens of others!*

*Burdens are lifted as we
roll them onto the Lord*

Practical Disciplines

Pray for yourself:

- Your troubles
- Your aches & pains
- Your faith & faithfulness
- Your courage to witness
- Your heart's secret goals
- Your needs, provisions
- Your finances, funds
- Your enemies

Pray for your Future

- Your plans
- Your goals
- Your ministries
- Your vision

Pray for your family

- Each member by name and need
- Salvation of children
- Spouse needs
- Spiritual growth & love of all in family
- Health and safety
- Protection from evil & temptation

Pray for your faults

- Your struggles
- Your worries
- Your temptations
- Your wants & wishes
- Your heartaches
- Your failures

SONGS:

Burdens Are Lifted At Calvary / Jesus Knows Just What I Need / No One Understands Like Jesus / What a Friend We Have in Jesus / Take Your Burden to the Lord and Leave It There / I Cast All My Cares Upon You.

Cast your burden on the Lord...He shall sustain you. – Ps. 55:22
Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. – 1 Pet.5:7

Now Go To The Workbook!

We have provided you with a Workbook to accompany these lessons. You will find it a wonderful help as you begin the process of personal discipline of prolonged prayer. This will be especially helpful in doing a Personal Prayer Retreat in which you have one or two days to carefully work through each step.

Close Your Time Of Intimacy

Extended Times With God

Intimacy with God is very personal. It is a rich time of fellowship with God and personal inventory through the work of God's Spirit. It is a good thing to take a break at this point in your prayer time, unless of course you are doing the hour of intercession and not an extended time. Go for a walk. Give yourself a time of rejoicing. Listen to worship tapes and let your heart be glad in the Lord. He is with you. Enjoy basking in His presence.

Take Time

Developing Intimacy with God takes time. There are no shortcuts, no quick fixes, no speed-praying techniques. Spending time with God is about spending time with God! God is not in a hurry. He never was and never will be. Slow down and get to know Him. Your journey is the journey of a lifetime.

A Prepared Heart

There are many ways to search your own heart and mind to see if there is any wicked way in you and allow the Holy Spirit to convict, cleanse and fill you, so that you can pray "in the Spirit."

Utilize this workbook often to exhaust the possibilities of worship, and thanksgiving. We often cheat God and ourselves by not spending adequate time basking in God's presence. Worship and thanksgiving are not bribes offered to an angry God. They are our expressions of true heart-felt adoration and gratitude.

Take Spiritual Inventory

We have prepared a number of tools that can be useful in self evaluation. We encourage you to use them as the Spirit leads.

- Disciple's Maturity Check-up
- Hindrances to Prayer
- Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual Warfare is Not War Games

It is serious business to take God and his word seriously. When Paul exhorts that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces, he was not speaking in hyperbole. That is a reality. You cannot learn spiritual warfare by occasionally practicing it. It only comes through daily discipline and exercise.