



2026 Q2 Growing in A Relationship with God

Lesson 6: Prayer Warriors

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INTRODUCTION

The lesson provides three outstanding Old Testament examples of Enoch, Moses, and Daniel. But before we look more closely at what got those folks their prayer warrior creds, I want to step back and talk a bit about prayer itself.

What is prayer?

The dictionary definition:

- 1) an address (as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought
- 2) a: set order of words used in praying;
b: an earnest request or wish

Do you have a definition of your own?

We have many examples of prayer in the Bible: Jesus' prayer for His disciples, David all through the Psalms, Solomon's prayer for wisdom – But what about Abraham when he talked with God about sparing Sodom, or Moses when He went into God's presence and spoke face to face as a man with a friend?

Or what about the disciples talking with Jesus on the road to Amais, at the last supper table or in the garden, would these also be examples of prayer? This is how one of the founders of our used this description to define what prayer is:

“Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. **Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend.** He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the

Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him.”
{COL 129.3}

What do you think of the definition of prayer as conversation with a friend?

What is necessary in order to have such an interaction with someone?

Don't you have to actually be friends?

Can you have “conversation as with a friend”, with a stranger?

Would it be necessary to get to know a person before we converse with them like a friend?

When we get to know a person, do we suddenly make an intentional choice to talk differently to them, or as we get to know them do we find our conversation becomes more open, more intimate and more interactive?

“Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with our heavenly Father. Our minds may be drawn out toward Him; we may meditate upon His works, His mercies, His blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with Him. In order to commune with God, **we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life.**

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order **to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.** – CSA 26

“Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God... – CSA 27

What different types of conversations do you have with friends?

- Thanks/Gratitude
- Requests
- Encouragement
- Empathy
- Venting/Complaining/Protesting
- Crying
- Laughing
- Interceding

In other words, when one is in relationship with God doesn't one share their entire life with God by communicating with Him?

Does it then surprise us then that Jesus prayed a lot?

“Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among men, was often in prayer. Our Saviour identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, “in all points tempted like as we are;” but as the sinless one His nature recoiled from evil; He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer.” – CSA 26

“Jesus sought earnestly for strength from His Father. This the divine Son of God considered of more value even for Himself, than to sit at the most luxurious table. He has given us evidence that **prayer** is essential in order to **receive strength to contend with the powers of darkness**, and to do the work allotted us. Our own strength is weakness, but that which God gives is mighty, and will make everyone who obtains it more than conqueror.—Testimonies for the Church 2:202, 203 (1869). – CH 86

When you are in conversation with a friend, are those one-way or two-way conversations?

What happens in a relationship if you do all the talking but never stop to let the other person respond?

What if all you are doing is praying but never stopping to listen for God's response?

How do we listen to God?

- Reading His Word
- Meditating upon nature
- Listening to His Spirit, the still small voice
- Contemplating history, recent events, circumstances of life, and God's character and principles
- Remaining open to and searching for truth
- Studying the Word with others

What do you find most helpful in getting to know and interacting with God in a two-way conversation?

What about other types of prayers, of the non-conversational variety? Are there different types of prayer?

- **Ritual prayers** done by rote – Rosary, Novena, Lord’s Prayer



Prayer beads – also called rosaries, malas, tasbih, misbaha, or japa malas) are strings of beads used across many religions and spiritual traditions as a physical aid to count repetitions of prayers, mantras, chants, or divine names. They help maintain focus, track progress during devotion, and support meditative or repetitive prayer practices without losing count.



Phylacteries (also known as tefillin in Hebrew – small, black leather boxes containing handwritten scrolls of Torah passages)



Prayer spinners – Tibetan Buddhist prayer wheels (also called mani wheels or mani khorlo in Tibetan) – cylindrical devices filled with printed or inscribed sacred mantras. Spinning the wheel clockwise is believed to generate spiritual merit equivalent to reciting the mantras aloud, purifying negative karma, spreading blessings, and promoting compassion for all beings.

What do you think about such prayers and what is their purpose?

Why do people pray such prayers?

Trouble concentrating?

To appease, as payment/penance, to influence?

Interestingly, an article entitled “Praying to God is like talking to a friend” cites recent brain research by Uffe Schjodt, who examined with MRI scans the brains of 20 Christians while they prayed. The researcher said,

“It’s like talking to another human. We found no evidence of anything mystical.” Interestingly though, the areas that lit up that are similar to talking with a friend **only happened with improvised prayer**. When people recited the Lord’s Prayer the same areas lit up as when reciting a nursery rhyme, which are areas associated with rehearsal, repetition and recall. In other words, reciting memorized prayers are NOT the same as talking with a friend. Memorized prayer is done from rote, and the heart is not in it. And such prayer won’t bring about the transformational experience; it is basically fake and brain scans can see the difference. But when individuals prayed spontaneously, they activated the same brain regions that activate when we are aware of another intelligent person, activating circuitry that is linked with the theory of mind - an awareness that other individuals have their own independent motivations and intentions (*Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, [DOI: 10.1093/scan/nsn050](https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsn050)).

These areas process desire and contemplate how the other might react to the expressed desire, as well as the prefrontal cortex which anticipates what the other person might do, and memories areas

associated with previous encounters filling in context for this encounter. In other words, it is relational interaction. Notice from back in our first quote, if we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and prayer, THEN our prayers will take the form of conversation with God as with a friend. She had this exactly right. We must come to experience God as a real individual being, before our prayers become transformational. If we pray from rote, when we merely do ritualized religious activities, our prayers will not be the prayers as with a friend. Our brains will not experience the positive brain changes and we won't be transformed to be ever more like Christ if we merely do proforma prayer.

What then is the purpose of prayer?

Listen to what this author says about the purpose of prayer:

“Prayer is heaven’s ordained **means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character**. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, “Ye shall receive.” – AA 564

And remember from the previous quote about prayer giving us strength to contend against the powers of darkness? Ms. White believes this is another key purpose of prayer:

“**The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray**. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path.... – CSA 27

“The idea that prayer is not essential is **one of Satan’s most successful devices to ruin souls**. Prayer is communion with God, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of strength, and peace, and happiness. – CG 518

“Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan.” -- FLB 225

“**Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power**. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved. **Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Wellspring of life and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the**

religious experience. Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and **you lose your hold on God.** The spiritual faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor. It is only at the altar of God that we can kindle our tapers with divine fire. It is only the divine light that will reveal the littleness, the incompetence, of human ability, and give clear views of the perfection and purity of Christ. It is only as we behold Jesus that we desire to be like Him, only as we view His righteousness that we hunger and thirst to possess it; and it is only as we ask in earnest prayer, that God will grant us our heart's desire." – GW 255

What if my heart's desire is for better lung function and I pray earnestly for it but won't quit smoking, what is the purpose of such prayer?

Many people pray for "magical" solutions, for God to intervene and stop the consequences of their own choices, for God to violate His own laws and allow sin (or being out of harmony with his design laws) to continue without damage to the sinner. "Lord give me a happy marriage" prays a husband while he beats his wife. "Lord bless me with good health" while I eat big mac's fries, candy, and snack cakes every day. Is there purpose in these prayers?

What about the question of whether our prayers will change what God will do? Or perhaps, if we pray will God help us do something He has explicitly told us not to do or that He doesn't want us to do?

The answer is...maybe – what food did God provide for the children of Israel in the desert?

Manna, what did they beg for? Fleshpots of Egypt, but what did God want them to eat?

Who brought the quail?

Why did God bring the quail?

Did God want them to have kings?

Did He warn them specifically against it?

Who chose their first two kings? God did.

Why did God choose their first two kings?

Does this give us pause as we put our requests before God?

What about when we pray for physical healing for ourselves or our loved ones?

Could this be why we are instructed to pray in this manner, particularly in intercessory prayer:

"In prayer for the sick it should be remembered that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." (Rom 8:26)

We do not know whether the blessing [healing] we desire will be best or not. Therefore, our prayers should include this thought:

“Lord, thou knowest every secret of the soul. Thou art acquainted with these persons. Jesus, their Advocate, gave His life for them. His love for them is greater than ours can possibly be. If, therefore, it is for Thy glory and good of the afflicted ones, we ask, in the name of Jesus, that they may be restored to health. If it be not Thy will that they may be restored, we ask that Thy grace may comfort and Thy presence sustain them in their sufferings. God knows the end from the beginning. He is acquainted with the hearts of all men. He reads every secret of the soul. He knows whether those for whom prayer is offered would or would not be able to endure the trials that would come upon them should they live. He knows whether their lives would be a blessing or a curse to themselves and to the world. This is one reason why, while presenting our petitions with earnestness, we should say, “Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done.” – MH 229

Maybe this should be our posture and attitude about any and all prayer requests, but especially intercessory prayers – Where we make known our hearts desires, but also say, “But God, I trust you and I know you know what is best, and if this will be harmful, if this is outside your plan, then don’t grant my request, even though I really really want it.” “Oh, and if you don’t grant it can you give me a clue to understand so I can be at peace?” What about such a prayer?

So prayer is important, but does it matter to whom one prays?

Isn’t it true that those who flew planes into buildings on 9/11 prayed five times per day?
What if one prays five times per day but cherishes faulty God concepts?

Does it make a difference if we pray to Jesus or if we pray to Baal?

What if we pray to Baal but call him Jesus?

Does it make a difference if we pray to a God who loved us so much that He gave His life to heal us and save us from our terminal condition, or if we pray to a God who is angry and wrathful and sent His Son, and executed His Son in our place, but if we don’t accept that propitiation of blood, then God will kill us?

Why is the God we are praying to so important?

When we pray to (a) God as in conversation with a friend, we open ourselves up to God, we share our thoughts and feelings and hopes and fears with Him, not to inform Him but to connect with Him in relationship and allow Him to lead us in healthy ways. Perhaps the primary power prayer has is on the one praying. Prayer changes the person who prays. How?

Prayer is a form of worship, and the law of worship says that we become like that which we worship, admire, esteem...so, is it important to be sure to whom we are praying?

Putting aside Baal, and Buddah, and Allah, do all Christians pray to the same God? When Jesus said, “they will come to me in the last day and say, Lord Lord...” we did all these righteous things in your name, to whom is He referring? Is He referring to agnostics and atheists, Buddhists or Muslims? No, He is referring to people who are claiming to be praying to Him, these are professed Christians, but He never knew them. How can this be? How can a person pray to Jesus and yet not be a Christian?

“In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. **In trampling upon the law of God**, they deny the authority of the Law-giver. It is as easy to **make an idol of false doctrines and theories** as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. **By misrepresenting the attributes of God, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character.** With many, **a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the living God, as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few.** Thousands deify nature while they deny the God of nature. Though in a different form, **idolatry exists in the Christian world today** as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists--the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, **even of some theological institutions--is little better than Baal**, the sun-god of Phoenicia. GC 583

The picture we hold of the God we are praying to is critically important.

So why ask God for something if He already knows we need it?

Why do we pray if God already knows everything?

Why do you talk with your spouse about stuff your spouse already knows?

If your children win a ball game, and you were watching, on the way home do the kids replay the game with you? “Hey, did you see me catch that fly ball? When I stole second I bet you thought they were going to get me out didn’t you?”

Why do you have such a conversation if you already saw it happen?

Does it do something for the relationship?

Do we draw closer to each other by sharing the experience this way?

There is joy that comes when we rejoice together, and bonding that comes when we cry together. Doesn't God want us to pray (talk with Him) because He wants to share life with us? He wants to bond with us, to have unity with us. This why we come to Him even when He already knows.

So, we have determined that prayer is to be our conversations with God, a way to commune with Him in relationship, and grow more like Him...and we've been told in Matthew that if we evil humans know how to give good gifts to our children, then how much more will our Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him.

First of all, when we go to God in prayer, do we go with a certainty that God longs to give us good things?

Does God do good for us only when asked or does God use His resources to give us good things even if we don't ask?

Was Christ given to the human race?

Was this a good gift?

Did we have to ask?

So...what is the purpose in asking?

- It is an acknowledgment on our part of our need, our inability to provide it for ourselves, our understanding that God can provide our need
- It keeps us humble...by waiting to give certain gifts until asked, God helps us remember our true situation and condition, mitigate against arrogance, pride, complacency - Reminds us that the gifts are indeed gifts, which hopefully instills understanding for how they should be used
- Our asking gives God our permission to work in our lives. Why would that be necessary? Because He respects us, our individuality, our freedom and won't use force or coercion. He waits to be invited into your life, heart, and mind.

“Christ's lessons in regard to prayer should be carefully considered. **There is a divine science in prayer**, and His illustration brings to view principles that all need to understand. He shows what is the true spirit of prayer, He teaches the necessity of perseverance in presenting our requests to God, and assures us of His willingness to hear and answer prayer. – COL 142

What do you think about the concept that “there is a divine science in prayer”...what science do you suppose she is referring to there? Reality? Quantum entanglement?

What do you think the scripture means when it says, “the prayer of righteous man avails much”?

Well, how do conversations work?

How do relationships work?

If prayer is a vehicle of communication within a relationship, then it works based on the quality of the relationship – thus the prayer of a righteous man avails much – why?

Because the righteous man has a close relationship with God and knows God, which will, 1) affect the quality of the prayer, and 2) have a greater resonance with God’s methods, principles, cause, goals, purposes, and thus God rejoices in such prayers. The prayers of the selfish man limit God’s actions, like a child who begs their parent to give them something the parent knows will harm the child – the parent loves the child, but such a request limits what the parent can do.

For more divine science in prayer, consider the text in Matthew that says,

“And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.” Is there more power in aggregate prayer than individual prayer? What would make that possible? How about a little quantum entanglement? Ms. White says this about it: “The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of God’s people are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be **expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer.** The power given will be **proportionate to the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another.**” — The Central Advance, Feb. 25, 1903

What does it mean proportionate to the unity of the members?

Unity in what way?

We are unified in our human condition – we all suffer in sin, we all age, we all die the first death, so what is this unity that empowers our corporate prayers?

Maybe it means the power of prayer is multiplied when we have unity of heart and mind, share the same appreciation and love for God, His methods, His kingdom of love, love for each other, and have a unified purpose to share this truth with others?

Just think about what happened on the day of Pentecost when the brethren were all in one place, “with one accord”, all energies, intentions, and desires united as one.

What about the Psalms 66:18 text that says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord **will not hear me.**”

Does this mean God goes deaf? Holds his hands over His ears and says, “Lalalala” so he can’t hear our prayers?

Or could it mean when we regard (cherish, favor, honor, esteem) iniquity in our hearts that we really don’t want God in our lives and don’t want His plan to be actualized in our lives?

Thus, God reads our heart’s intentions and not our words, so He doesn’t listen to what we say, but instead listens to what our hearts cling to or genuinely choose?

That same man who abuses his wife, and while hitting her tells his wife he only does it because he loves her...does she hear his love? Why not?

Is she deaf? What DOES she hear? She doesn’t hear love, because his behavior overrules his words.

What this passage means is if we cling to known sin, we are saying we do not actually want freedom from it, no matter what our words say, and God listens to our hearts’ intents, and not to our words.