

The Discipleship Wheel

Illustration

Chapter Seven

Prayer and The Word of God

Last Revised: 2/7/2012

Scripture Memory

John: 15:7

*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,
ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you.*

Review

- Draw The Wheel Illustration
- II Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 2:20
- II Timothy 3:16
- Joshua 1:8
- The Word Hand with your fingers
- Philippians 4:6-7
- The Prayer Hand with your fingers

Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord,
My spirit pants for Thee, O loving Word.
Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.
Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;
Teach me to love Thy Truth, for Thou art love.
Lathbury and Groves

Prayer and the Word of God

E. M. Bounds: “The Word of God is a great help in prayer. If it be lodged and written in our hearts, it will form an out flowing current of prayer, full and irresistible. Promises stored in the heart are to be the fuel from which prayer receives life and warmth, just as the coal stored in the earth ministers to our comfort on stormy days and wintery nights. The Word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished and made strong. Prayer, like man, cannot live by bread alone ‘but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.’ Unless the vital forces of prayer are supplied by God’s Word, prayer, though earnest, even vociferous in its urgency, is, in reality, flabby and vapid and void. The absence of vital force in praying can be traced to the absence of a constant supply of God’s Word to repair the waste and renew the life. He who would learn to pray well must first study God’s Word and store it in his memory and thought.” (E. M. Bounds, The Necessity of Prayer, Baker, 1976, page 123.)

I. How Do I Get This Thing To Work?

- A. This is the unspoken thought of virtually all Christians as it pertains to prayer. They see miracles in the Bible—the dead are raised; the 5,000 are fed; demons are cast out; water is turned to wine; people are healed. “If only I could do those things, then I could change the world! How do you get this thing to work?” The attitude of most Christians is more one of coveting the famed, “Midas Touch” in the ancient Greek fables of Aesop, where the king’s touch turned everything to gold, rather than a true desire to be used of God. Rather than the Midas Touch, we Christians want the “Jesus Touch.” We want the power of Jesus. We want the authority of Jesus, not that of the disciples who may or may not be able to cast out a demon, not that of the Apostles who, like Paul, may or may not be able to heal even themselves. But we want the authority of Jesus; we want the power of Jesus. The desire through the ages persists: “How do I get this thing to work?”
- B. This unspoken question, however, in reality begs certain other questions. Beneath its surface lies the true, unspoken desire of the Christian. Rather than the cry of the distraught father to Jesus in Mark 9:24—*I do believe; help my unbelief*—our desire is to get this thing to work. If we were truly honest with ourselves, we would admit our question is not, “How do I increase my faith?” nor is it, “How do I get this thing to work?” In reality it is:
- “How do I get what I ask for?”
 - “How do I get God to keep His word about giving me what I want?”
 - “What are the phrases or keys to getting what you want in prayer?”
 - “How do I get God to do what I want Him to do?”
 - “How do I get the Jesus Touch?”

C. Key Considerations

1. This frame of mind comes from two primary sources. The first is the desire to experience for ourselves what we see in the Scriptures. The danger here is in universalizing the spiritual experiences of others. Since it happened to Moses, since it happened to Elijah, since it happened to Paul, it can happen to me. This fails to take into account the reality that the life experiences of these men are separated by hundreds and sometimes thousands of years filled with “normal” Joes like you and me. These are unique men with unique experiences during a unique time period. Their life experience was not universal even for their time and certainly will not be for ours.
2. The second source of this frame of mind is a misuse of scriptural statements such as Matthew 21:22: *And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.* Since this is a straightforward statement, then we should indeed be able to make God our errand boy, our genie in the bottle. Yet, our life experience tells us otherwise. The reason for this is the reality that the Word of God is not written topically. To understand the issue of prayer, we must look at all the verses dealing with the subject. Although this will be by no means an exhaustive study on prayer, it will deal with one of the primary principles of prayer and one of the primary reasons our prayers go unanswered, that being the role of the Word of God and prayer.

D. The Chaos of Fleshly Faith

1. Reflect for a minute on the physical chaos that would exist in the world if we could have anything we ask in prayer if we only believed. I can remember as a young Christian walking across the campus at the University of Texas. I had just read Matthew 21:21-22: *And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.* I decided to exercise my faith. As I walked through the main mall of the campus, there were long rows of carefully manicured hedges. I asked in faith that when I came out of class, the shrubs would be ripped from the ground and cast into the University fountain. Surely, this was nothing compared to a fig tree and certainly miniscule compared to a mountain cast into the sea. Of course, this prayer was not answered. In fact, can you imagine the chaos that would ensue on a large University campus if every prayer of every believer were answered or if every time a new believer read Matthew 21:21-22, he attacked the nearest tree or mountain in prayer? Think of the grading system, the weather, the political environment, the physical environment, the buildings, the life on campus, the football games, and the ticket sales. Think of the chaos that would ensue if whatever a Christian prayed believing, he was able by faith to cause to come into

being. Think of thousands of Christian Aladdins, not with their genie and three wishes, but with their faith and an unlimited number of commands. We can praise God that this is not the case.

2. Considering the diversity in the body of Christ, think for a minute on one area—the weather. What would life be like if, in a city the size of New York City, every Christian who asked believing could have whatever weather he wanted on any given day? What chaos would ensue?

3. Reflect for a minute on the social chaos that would exist in the world if indeed we could have anything we ask in prayer if we only believe. Consider again the social diversity in a city like New York. Consider the changes the differing ethnic and social groups would like to see brought about. Now consider the chaos that would result as prayers were answered immediately as each group prayed their prayers for the city. What chaos would ensue?

4. Reflect on the political and economic chaos that would exist in the world if indeed we could have anything we ask in prayer if we only believe. Consider again New York City. Consider all the Christians, all desires, all the political and economic beliefs. Now what if as each day passed and each Christian prayed his political or economic desires, not just for themselves but for the city as a whole, and those desires were realized, what chaos would ensue?

5. We can thank God that people do not receive what they pray for. We live in the flesh, and God will never turn the world over to fleshly men. God will never relinquish His power and authority to men. Consider the fleshly faith movement, whereby we simply “name it and claim it” and where we have authority to command and by the magic phrase “in Jesus’ name” what we command comes into reality. This movement has its roots in the simple desire of Satan at the fall to be like God. Be not deceived; there is a big difference between carrying out the will of God under the authority of God as an ambassador and an emissary and being the one who has the authority to speak and command. Jesus made it clear that He has authority, and we are merely His emissaries, His slaves of faith.

6. Read Matthew 28:18-20. In the hierarchy of the ministry where does authority lie?

Matthew 28:18-20

18 *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

19 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

20 *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

7. In the following verses how are we as Christians depicted in this hierarchy?

Luke 17:10: *So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done."*

2 Corinthians 5:20: *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Ephesians 6:20: *for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

ABIDE

3306 *meno* (men'-o); a primary verb; to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy):

KJV-- abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for), X thine own. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.)

ABIDE, ABODE

1. *meno* ^3306^, used (a) of place, e. g., <Matt. 10:11>, metaphorically <1 John 2:19>, is said of God, <1 John 4:15>; Christ, <John 6:56; 15:4>, etc.; the Holy Spirit, <John 1:32-33; 14:17>; believers, <John 6:56; 15:4; 1 John 4:15>, etc.; the Word of God, 1 John 2:14; the truth, <2 John 2>, etc.; (b) of time; it is said of believers, <John 21:22-23; Phil. 1:25; 1 John 2:17>; Christ, <John 12:34; Heb. 7:24>; the Word of God, <1 Pet. 1:23>; sin, <John 9:41>; cities, <Matt. 11:23; Heb. 13:14>; bonds and afflictions, <Acts 20:23>; (c) of qualities; faith, hope, love, <1 Cor. 13:13>; Christ's love, <John 15:10>; afflictions, <Acts 20:23>; brotherly love, <Heb. 13:1>; the love of God, <1 John 3:17>; the truth, <2 John 2>.

(Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

8. In the coming study we will look at the alternative to fleshly faith and see indeed what God has to say about faith, prayer and the Word of God.

II. *If you abide in Me*

- A. What does it mean to abide in Christ?

- B. How does Galatians 2:20 speak to this principle?

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

- C. To abide means to remain in, to reside in. If you are abiding in Christ, what will characterize your life? Will you be doing your will or Christ's will?

- D. If you are abiding in Christ, what will shape the direction of your prayers?

1. In John 5:30 and 6:38, to whom did Jesus submit His will in terms of His actions?

John 5:30: I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 6:38: For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

2. In Luke 22:42, to whom did Jesus submit concerning His prayers?

Luke 22:42: *Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done.*

3. In your quest of praying by faith does the thought of submitting all your requests to the authority of God and His Word seem a hindrance or a help? Is your reaction, “Whew, for a minute I thought I would have the responsibility of doing God’s will rather than carrying out God’s will”? Or is your reaction, “I knew there was a catch; now I can’t get what I want. That’s no fun!”?

E. What then is the disclaimer in terms of your answered prayers?

F. Many will say, “Aw shucks, I knew there would be a catch. I can’t get what I pray for unless it is God’s will. That’s no fun; that’s no prayer at all. All that is is asking God to do what is already His will.” As if the real fun in prayer is getting to ask God to do things that are not His will. Is this your reaction? I can remember well my own disappointment as a young Christian when I found out that no matter how much I built up my faith, I would never get to have what I prayed for simply because I prayed in faith. It would have to be God’s will. I can remember sitting in a college and career Sunday school class at Allendale Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. The teacher was going over the subject of prayer and built his case by carefully going over all the verses on prayer that dealt with this subject. At the conclusion the answer was so very clear. Prayer, as in evangelism and the other great works of God, was not getting to be God. It was not getting God to do what you wanted.

Rather, prayer is getting to take part in the will and work of God. I would never have the “Jesus Touch.” I would never get to play God. I would never be able to simply by faith speak things into being. I can remember the disappointment I felt as I realized that, as in all other areas, my will, my desires, my concepts of justice and right and wrong must be subject to God’s will. I mean, what is the use of praying if all you get to pray is God’s will? This was at first discouraging, then frustrating and finally, at last, freeing, as I came to view prayer, not as a way of getting things, but rather as one more act of grace on God’s part which allows me to take part in His great work of bringing glory to His name. This initial reaction of disappointed frustration reflected clearly on my immaturity at the time. Is this your response to the truth concerning faith and prayer? If it does not make you powerful, but rather makes you a servant of the One who retains the authority and power, do you then loose interest? What is your response to the reality that prayer is a servant role rather than a power role? Is your interest in prayer the glory of God or the benefit of self?

- G. Unanswered prayers are a real stumbling block for many Christians. In fact, many Christians have come to equate “prayer” with “supplication.” When they hear the question, “Do you ever pray?” they hear, “Do you ever ask God for things?” Equating prayer with supplication is like equating conversation with asking. Imagine a conversation where the individual did not let you talk, but rather considered a conversation being his, completely dominating the discussion with his requests of things for you to do for him. That is how man has come to view prayer. Prayer is asking God for things. Men of prayer are men who have learned the secret of not only asking but getting. In fact, many are so selfish that they come to the conclusion that if God does not do what they tell Him to do, there must be something wrong with God.

Below are a series of verses dealing with the subject of prayers which God will not answer. Read the passage and then below record your observations on why, according to the verse, prayers may go unanswered. (I have emphasized certain aspects of the passage to aid you in your meditations.)

Deuteronomy 1:42-45: *And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, ‘Do not go up, nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.’ So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. **Instead you rebelled against the command of the LORD**, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country. And the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you, and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah. Then you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD did not listen to your voice, nor give ear to you.’*

Psalm 66:18: *If I regard **wickedness in my heart**, the Lord will not hear;*

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2: *Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for **they do not know they are doing evil**. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.*

Isaiah 59:1-2: *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But **your iniquities** have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.*

Jeremiah 7:9-10: *Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal, and walk after other gods that you have not known, **then come and stand before Me in this house**, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'--that you may do all these abominations?*

Matthew 7:11: *If you then, being evil, know how to **give good gifts** to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!*

Matthew 21:22: *And all things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you shall receive."*

Matthew 26:39: *And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; **yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.**"*

Mark 10:38: *But Jesus said to them, "You **do not know what you are asking for**. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"*

Luke 4:3: *And **the devil said to Him**, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*

(Remember, God does not do magic tricks at our bidding. Cross reference this verse with Luke 23:8-9: *Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.*)

John 15:7: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.*

John 15:16: *You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: *And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

(If you are in rehab and the physical therapist is seeking for you to gain 100% use of your legs, will He listen to you when you complain about the pain?)

WORD, John 15:7
4487 *rhema* (hray'-mah); from 4483; an utterance (individually, collectively or specifically); by implication, a matter or topic (especially of narration, command or dispute); with a negative naught whatever: KJV-- + evil, + nothing, saying, word. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.)

WORD
2. *rhema* ^4487^ denotes "that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing"; in the singular, "a word," e. g., <Matt. 12:36; 27:14; 2 Cor. 12:4; 13:1; Heb. 12:19>; in the plural, speech, discourse, e. g., <John 3:34; 8:20; Acts 2:14; 6:11,13; 11:14; 13:42; 26:25; Rom. 10:18; 2 Pet. 3:2; Jude 17>; it is used of the gospel in <Rom. 10:8> (twice), <17>, RV, "the word of Christ" (i. e., the "word" which preaches Christ); <10:18; 1 Pet. 1:25> (twice); of a statement, command, instruction, e. g., <Matt. 26:75; Luke 1:37>, RV, "(no) word (from God shall be void of power)", <v. 38; Acts 11:16; Heb. 11:3>.

The significance of *rhema* (as distinct from *logos*) is exemplified in the injunction to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," <Eph. 6:17>; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture.

(Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words), Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

1 Timothy 2:8: *Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, **without wrath and dissension.***

James 1:6: *But let him ask in faith without any **doubting**, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

James 4:3: *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with **wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

James 5:16: *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The **effective prayer** of a **righteous man** can accomplish much.*

1 Peter 3:7: *You husbands likewise, **live with your wives in an understanding way**, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

1 John 3:22: *and whatever we ask we receive from Him, **because we keep His commandments** and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.*

- D. If your prayers were answered unconditionally regardless of whether or not you were abiding in Christ and His Word was abiding in you, what percentage of your time do you think would be spent seeking the will of God?
- E. A good saying to remember is, “God can do anything, but He doesn’t. He only does His will.” Is it a relief to you or a disappointment to you, to know that God will not answer your prayers if it is not His will?

IV. *Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you*

Consider hypothetical selfish children who are on an outing with their father. Unconcerned with spending the day with their dad who has taken the day off to be with his children, they spend all their time trying to figure out how to get him to do what they want, how to get him to agree to their list of activities and the things they want to do. They know he may be thinking of a day at the ball park, and they begin working on how to get him to the water park and the amusement park instead. All their conversation, all their effort is focused on this one thing: how to influence their dad to do their bidding. We may grow accustomed to such childish and selfish behavior by children, but how many of us take this same approach in our relationship with God? How many of us reveal this same selfish attitude to God in our prayers—not His good name, not our relationship with Him, not drawing closer to Him but what we want Him to do and how to get Him to do it? How do we get Him to do this? Kneel? Fast? Prostrate? Tongues? Magic words? Repetitive prayers? No matter, we focus all of our attention on getting God to do our bidding.

- A. How will the first two principles in this study impact our application of “Ask whatever you wish”? What will we wish God to do, if the first two principles are at work in our lives?

E. M. Bounds: “God’s Word is the basis, as it is the directory of the prayer of faith. ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,’ says St. Paul, ‘teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.’ As this word of Christ dwelling in us richly is transmuted and assimilated, it issues in praying. Faith is constructed of the Word and the Spirit, and faith is the body and substance of prayer. In many of its aspects prayer is dependent upon the Word of God...The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved. God has committed Himself, His purpose and His promise to prayer. His Word becomes the basis, the inspiration of our praying...” (E.M. Bounds, The Necessity of Prayer, Baker, 1976, page 120.)

- V. Application: Write a concluding statement summarizing how John 15:7 shapes our prayer life.**

Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 7 Theme: Prayer and The Word of God

Passage for Meditation: Galatians 2:20

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: John 5:30

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: John 6:38

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 7 Theme: Prayer and The Word of God

Passage for Meditation: Luke 22:42

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: John 14:33

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: John 15:7

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?