

Sincerity In Prayer

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In order for any relationship to grow and flourish, there is a very necessary component that has to be present. The very word relationship, gives a clue as to what needs to take place for a relationship to exist...what it takes to make it grow and to last. There has to be a relating taking place between those involved in the relationship...a relating and sharing...communication. That communication has to be open, honest and truthful if the relationship is going to last. The communication has to be meaningful and both parties have to be engaged...it has to be sincere.

Have you ever been involved in a serious conversation with someone who is not really interested in what is being discussed? The fact that they have little interest in what you are saying; becomes apparent very quickly. Their body language gives them away. They begin looking around, nodding their head, giving short answers, yawning and just generally looking disinterested. Or, maybe you are trying to talk to someone and they are staring at the TV, or maybe a computer screen and they do not even bother to make eye contact with you and maybe, just maybe you get an occasional grunt or nod out of them and even that seems to take a supreme effort on their part.

That is not a very good feeling is it? Especially when you feel what you have to say is important and when you need the other person to be engaged and listening and genuinely interested in what you are saying. You can be left feeling unwanted, unloved, unimportant and unworthy. We all need to be focused and sincere in our communication and especially with those whom we love and care about and those with whom we have a close personal relationship.

The closest relationship that we have, or should have in our lives, is that between us and God. Even though we cannot see God, we can still have communication and a relationship with Him. God communicates directly to us through His word and through His Spirit and the actions He takes. God makes Himself real to us; we know that He is there and that He takes an active role in our lives. We communicate with God through our prayers. Through prayer, we can speak directly to the creator and sustainer of all things! The one who created and put into place everything that we know and understand; everything that we can sense and touch and feel. Think how incredible and amazing that is...God hears us and He is very interested in what we have to say and how we feel. God does take the time to listen and to pay attention...anytime and anywhere, when we stop to communicate with Him through prayer.

God longs to have a close, personal relationship with us and it is through prayer that we remain in contact with Him. Do you pray to God often, or is it only when you need something from Him? Do you ever just talk to God casually about events of the day, or about what is happening in your life? God is our Father, He loves us and He wants to know about our fears, our concerns, our worries and our needs, but He also just wants to know us. God wants to know you on an individual level. God created man, so that He could have a relationship with Him. Why do you think that God is going to so much trouble to provide a way for salvation and to offer man eternal life?

We all turn to God for help, but how often do we actually take the time to thank God? Every day that we have on this earth, all that we are able to accomplish and everything that we have is due to God's love and mercy. We owe everything to Him. Everything around us all belongs to God, yet He allows us to have things to make our life more pleasant and enjoyable. God wants us to live happy and fulfilled lives. A large part of our happiness and fulfillment in this life comes from having a healthy and lasting relationship with God the Father. Spending time in prayer; is communicating with God and building on our relationship with Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:16

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

To stay close to God we have to pray without ceasing. How often do you talk to God and for how long? It is not only the content of our prayers that is important, but also the amount of time we spend in prayer. Do you set aside and devote some time to prayer every day? It seems like we can always find the time, no matter how busy we are, to do the things we want to do, but what about spending some time with God? God is offering us the greatest gift and opportunity of our lifetimes...eternal life in His kingdom and to dwell with Him and His Son forever! Is it too much to ask that we spend some time with him in prayer? We should crave that time, personal time, one-on-one with God through our prayers.

In the hectic lives that we lead and with all the activities and distractions that we have to deal with on a daily basis, our prayer life is always the first thing to suffer and it should be just the opposite! We can find time to spend in front of the television, or the computer; why is it that we do not find the time to converse with God? A real meaningful conversation, not just a few hurried words so we can be about the things that we think are more important. Relationships are a two-way street; we have to be involved too. God is not going to do it all for us; we have to show Him that we want a relationship and that we value it. Relationships that are one-sided usually fail sooner, or later.

James 4:7

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

God is our lifeline; He is our protector, our provider, our healer, the one who is always there for us without fail! It is through our prayers and our conversations with God that we are able to truly draw near to Him. You can come to know God...you can come to understand Him. As you draw closer to God through prayerful contact and build a deep and meaningful relationship with Him, He will reveal more of Himself to you and you will come to know Him more fully than you ever thought possible. God longs and yearns for that kind of relationship with you!

God loves you very much; He wants to be involved in your life! It almost seems beyond belief that we can come to have such a close relationship with the creator and sustainer of all things, that we can go to Him in absolute and complete confidence knowing that He hears our prayers, but it is possible. All we have to do is keep up our end of the relationship; God is always there to hold up His end. We can trust in and have absolute faith and trust in that.

Daniel 6:10

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

This situation occurred right after the governors of King Darius conspired against Daniel and convinced the King to sign a decree that banned the petitioning of anyone other than the King. Here we see that Daniel prayed three times that day and that it was his custom. That does not mean that it was only three times a day that he prayed. There is no restriction on how many times a day, or night, that we can go before God. Daniel's normal routine included praying three times a day to God. I'm sure there were days that he prayed more than just those three times, depending on what was going on and what types of situations he was in. Make it a part of your daily routine to talk to God. It does not have to be only when you are at home, if you look and you are committed, there are many opportunities to talk to God during the day, even while you work.

Daniel did not try and hide what he was doing. He prayed with his windows open. We do not have to make a display of our prayers to God, but we do not have to be afraid and go hide somewhere when we need to pray either. Some situations require an immediate prayer! Sometimes we have to pray immediately wherever we are and whatever we are doing. We can pray to God silently in any situation, without making a big fuss of it. God will hear you. If you do not take the time to stay in touch with God often, you may not be able to find Him when you really need Him!

1 Thessalonians 5:16

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Pray without ceasing, go to God. Praise Him, pour your heart out to Him, tell Him everything that is on your mind and the things that are going on in your life. Tell Him your thoughts, your fears...confess your sins, ask for forgiveness. Build your relationship with God, get to know Him. He will reveal Himself to you more fully and completely than ever before. It is just like having a relationship with a physical person, the more you talk and relate things in your life and your experiences, the more you get to know one another. It works the same way with God. God loves to have that contact with us; we learn more about Him and He learns more about us as individuals. Everyone seeks after happiness, contentment, fulfillment, love and peace in their lives...this is how you can have it. It is a real relationship!

The content of our prayers is also important and something that we need to take into consideration and think about. God wants to have a real conversation with us and not some words mumbled in haste. Prayer is not an obligation, it is an opportunity...something we should crave and look forward to! If you look on prayer grudgingly, as something you must do and try to just get it over with as quickly as possible, you might as well not bother at all. God wants sincere, thoughtful communication from the heart. God wants to know you...intimately. Do not lie down at night and say a few hurried words just before you drop off to sleep. Go to God in sincerity.

Jesus Christ prayed to the Father frequently and in sincerity. He valued that time and the connection He had with His Father. He prayed sincerely and from His heart. He let His emotions show in His prayers. He praised God, pleaded with God, took His cares and concerns to God and He asked of God to provide for Him when it was necessary. Christ knew the power of prayer and He used it frequently and effectively. That night in the garden of Gethsemane, just before His arrest, Christ poured His heart out to the Father.

Luke 22:41

⁴¹ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." ⁴³ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

We must learn to use prayer in the same way. Christ understood that connection and the power of prayer very well. He maintained a close, personal relationship with the Father at all times. There is a time coming not too far off in the future when we will have to rely on God for everything. Now is the time to be building that relationship and establishing that line of communication, so that when the hard times come we will know exactly where to find our Father and the help that He will provide.

Hebrews 5:6

⁶ *As He also says in another place:*

"You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek";

⁷ *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,*

Christ understood and took advantage of that special relationship and He drew power and strength from it. He prayed with meaning and with deliberation, He prayed with emotion and feeling. He shared everything with God and He was heard. God heard and responded to Him. Christ sets the example for us in all things and we should look to His example to see how to have a relationship with God through our prayers and how to make our prayers meaningful and sincere.

James 5:16

¹⁶ *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.* ¹⁷ *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours (he was human with the same emotions, the same failings and the same weaknesses that all of us have), and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.* ¹⁸ *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

Never, ever underestimate the power of prayer. You will get out of prayer, what you put into it. If your prayers are half-hearted with no real faith and trust in God, then you will receive exactly that same kind of response back. Sometimes when we are new in the faith and do not understand exactly what we are doing, God will still honor our prayers, even though we may be lacking in faith and trust. But, God also expects us to mature and grow and He expects us to come to have that faith and to trust Him in the things that we ask of Him. We are to go to God in faith, believing that what we ask will be done. People are afraid to believe that God will actually answer their prayers and provide the things that they are asking for!

If we believe that God is and that He is who He says that He is, why do we doubt? It is a lack of faith that causes doubt. A lack of faith is one of the signs that will be prevalent at the end of this age. We are already at a point in our society where people trust in nothing but themselves, they have faith in nothing but themselves. God is there...He will always be there, He has always been there. Jesus Christ will return and He will take control of this earth. Then mankind will finally come to believe and to have faith and to trust.

Luke 18:1

18 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ² saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. ³ Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' ⁴ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

⁶ Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

From this scripture, it appears that at the time of Christ's return there will be little faith to be found. He is talking about real faith here, not just a professed faith without any real belief, or trust. Faith is an integral part of prayer; you cannot have one without the other. In the book of James, we are given instruction on how to receive physical healing for our illnesses. There is a process of anointing with oil, laying on of hands and praying to God for intercession.

This is the first step we are to take whenever any of us are ill. We go to God and petition Him, we ask for His involvement and His help and His intervention. We seek Him in prayer and humble ourselves before Him.

There is nothing wrong with going to those that are skilled in methods of healing and in the treatment of different conditions and illnesses, but the very first thing we should do is go to God and seek out His healing and we should go to Him in complete faith and sincere meaningful prayer.

James 5:13

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Notice what it says here, it is the prayer of faith. There are those who look upon anointing as just some sort of symbolic gesture, just something to be done and gotten out of the way, so that they can then pursue their own desires and wants for whatever they are suffering from. If the faith, trust and belief in what God tells us is not there, then they might as well not even bother! Anointing and healing are all about prayer, faith and trust in God to do what He has said He will do. When we go to God for healing it should be with complete confidence that it will be done as He has promised. In Exodus 15:26, God calls Himself Yahweh Ropheka, the God Healer, or God Who Heals You.

Ultimately, it is up to God whether we will be healed, or not. Sometimes God's will is not in agreement with what we want and the way we think things should happen. We have to be prepared to accept His will, whatever it may be. There are plenty of examples we can draw from in the Bible, of bad things that happened to good people. We always have to do as God asks us and never lose heart, never neglect prayer and never lose faith in Him and His word. God thinks on a much higher plane than we do and we just cannot understand everything that happens and why it happens.

Never get angry, or upset with God and cut-off communication with Him. People sometimes react very negatively when things do not go the way they want and they get angry and blame God. It is those very times that we need God the most and the comfort and peace that only He can provide. It is in those times that we need to really communicate our feelings to God and pour out our hearts to Him. If you are angry, or upset tell God! You do not have to hold back, but do not stop praying and communicating with Him. If you are feeling hurt, or you are angry and upset, how can God help you if you do not go to Him!

David faced a very trying situation in his life, after he had sinned with Bathsheba and had Uriah killed. Bathsheba bore David a son, but God struck the child, because of the sin that David had committed.

2 Samuel 12:15

And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. ¹⁶ David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷ So the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them.

David humbled himself and he fasted and pleaded with God to spare his son. He knew that God was the only one that could reverse the situation and restore his son to him. He focused all of his effort and energy in communicating with God and humbling himself, so that God would hear him. David never gave up hope while his son was alive and he believed that God might change his mind, forgive him, and heal his son. For seven long days David lay prostrated before God, without food, praying for his son.

2 Samuel 12:19

¹⁹ When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?"

And they said, "He is dead."

²⁰ So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. ²¹ Then his servants said to him, "What *is* this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child *while he was* alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

²² And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell *whether* the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' ²³ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

When the child died, David did not react in anger. Instead, the first thing that he did after cleaning himself up; was to go in and worship God. He did not harbor any anger or resentment for what had happened and he kept that line of communication, that he had with God, open and alive. He accepted God's will in the matter, because he had already done everything that he could, while the child was alive. David had prayed, he had remained faithful and he had hoped, but he knew once the child had died that God's decision was final and he accepted that.

We should also never neglect going to God in repentance when we sin, or when we do and say things that we should not do. We have to go to God in prayer and sincere repentance asking to be forgiven. We are covered by Christ's sacrifice and we can be forgiven when we are weak and transgress, but we have to ask for it. God wants us to come to Him and ask for forgiveness, there is no other way. Your sins will not just automatically go away, even though you follow God's way of life and have accepted Christ. Our prayers for repentance should be very serious and sincere and filled with genuine sorrow. We are seeking God's forgiveness and He gave up His own son so that we could be forgiven...it is very serious and not to be taken lightly! A very dear price was paid to provide us that opportunity. Take the time to read Psalm 51, David's beautiful prayer of repentance.

God wants to forgive you, God stands ready and willing to forgive you, but you must ask and you must be sincere and have remorse for any wrong that you have done. You also have to set yourself to not repeat your mistakes. God expects us to learn and to grow and not go back and do the same wrong things, over and over again. God will erase our sins and make them as far away from us as the east is from the west. God will remember them no more, they will be gone off of our record, erased forever, but we must go to God in prayer and seek forgiveness.

Sometimes people do not know what to pray about and it can be difficult when you first start building a relationship with God, to know exactly what you should be praying for, but once you start praying on a regular basis you will find that there are plenty of things to talk about with God. We do not always have time when certain situations arise to have a long prayerful discussion with God, but we should always find the time to have meaningful prayer at some time during our day. I do not leave my home in the morning, until I have asked God for protection and guidance. It is very important in this world that we have to live and work in, with all the dangers that exist, that God be there with us throughout the day providing protection and helping us with our decisions and with our thoughts and attitudes.

Jesus Christ provided us with an outline of what our prayers should contain. If you ever have trouble getting started in prayer, it is a good place to begin. All of the things that He mentions can be expanded on greatly. Christ did not intend for this prayer to be memorized and repeated over and over again. It was meant as an outline to give us a general idea of some of the things that our prayers should contain and for us to build on with our own words.

Luke 11:1

11 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

² So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

³ Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one."

You can always turn to the Bible for help if you need some ideas for prayer. There are many places in the Bible that inspire meditation and prayer. The book of Psalms is a very good place to go to. It is a good practice to pray as you have your Bible open in front of you for study, or comfort, or for whatever reason. Pray as you go through your Bible and ask God to inspire your reading and understanding. God talks to us through His word and it is important that we go to Him for understanding and direction. His word leads us into all truth.

There are some religions that use chants and repetitions of words in their worship and in their prayers, but we are warned against doing that. God wants real communication, He wants to hear our thoughts, our desires and our feelings and He wants to hear them in our own words. Not in some sort of pre-written script that is repeated over and over again, without any real thought or meaning behind it. Without any thought, meaning, or feeling, words are just meaningless. We are also told not to make a spectacle of our prayers. Our personal prayers are a private intimate conversation with God and they should be. We do not go out into the streets and on the street corners, out in front of everyone, and loudly hold our private conversations do we? That is not a place for our conversations with God either!

Matthew 6:5

⁵ "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸ "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

God does know everything that we need. God knows even before we ask what we require. He wants to hear it from us...He wants us to come to Him, to talk to Him, to ask of Him. He wants a real relationship! If God just gave us everything we needed all the time what would happen? We would soon quit going to Him and having a relationship with Him. When we go to God and ask for what we need, it keeps us in remembrance that we are dependent on Him. He supplies everything that we need and we rely on Him for the very air that we breathe! God wants us to have comfortable lives, He wants us to be happy and to enjoy His creation, but He will only give us what we need. Have you ever noticed that all of the people whom God used in the Bible, with a few exceptions, all the prophets and men that God raised up for a purpose were of humble means and had little to no possessions?

Matthew 6:25

²⁵ "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

²⁸ "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

³¹ "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

Can we trust that God knows what we need? God is the creator; He is the provider, the healer, the one who offers us eternal life as a free gift. Surely God knows exactly what we are in need of and that is exactly what He provides for us. Whatever He chooses and determines to give us is enough! What more do we need? He has given us the ticket to eternal life...He has shown us the way and provided the opportunity...what can we possess that is more valuable, or precious than that? What else can we possibly need, or want?

We need to pray sincerely and fervently for each other in love and with care and concern. This world is headed for a very turbulent and chaotic time that will be like no other and that has never occurred on this earth before! People are going to become confused and lose their way. People will lose faith and take their eye off the goal...people will lose hope and sink into despair. We are to help each other, to support one another, to pray and care for one another. Each part of the body is important; each part has its place in the whole.

Hebrews 10:19

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²² 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. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

So much the more as you see the day approaching. That is part of our responsibility as part of the body. We have to uphold and help one another, encourage, support and assist one another in any way that we can to go all the way and claim our prize...to receive our crown!

Our attitude and the manner in which we approach prayer is very important. We are coming to God before His throne. Our prayers are sweet incense to God. God longs to hear from each of us, He wants that close personal contact. He wants to be involved in our lives in every way. Do not neglect this most important and personal relationship with your creator! Think about it...we can actually speak to God through our prayers. Why would anyone not take advantage of that opportunity? Go to God...often!

Colossians 4:2

² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)