

PRAYER:

Text: John 17:1-26

Prayer is the heart sending its full and happy pulsations up to God, through the glad currents of joy and thanksgiving. It entails opening the door of our heart to allow Jesus Christ to come in and glorify himself in our struggles. He is ever standing at the door of your heart and my heart eagerly knocking to step in and save the day in the midst of storms (Rev 3:20). Not to pray is to abandon Christ and Heaven. Therefore to pray is to be loyal to God. Prayer can be inform of Adoration/worship, confession, thanksgiving, supplication & petition, the million dollar question is have I **communicated with God?**

1.0 Need for prayer

❖ **God values our communion with Him**

Friends it is paramount to understand that the most important aspect about prayer is communion with God. Our calling is to have communion and fellowship with God. God has called us into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor 1:9). Though we may ask, petition or plead with God for various issues, the purpose of prayer should and must be communion with the Almighty God. We get this privilege through prayer.

❖ **God listens**

None is as needy as man, none is so able and ready to supply every need and any need as God. Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you (Matt 7:7) "God's promises lie like giant corpses without life, headed for decay and dust, unless people appropriate and give life to these promises through earnest and prevailing prayer" (Kennedy ochieng'-prayer that works)

❖ **God Hears**

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2)

Heb 5:7 records that during the days of Jesus' life on earth he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and was heard because of his reverent submission

❖ **God answers**

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know (Jer 33:3). God is ready to commune with us, listen to us, hear us and finally demystify the mysteries in our life. Never bear need less pain when you can take it to God in prayer.

2.0 How then can we best, meaningfully engage in prayer?

❖ **Be conscious that God is a loving father who seeks us to worship him. He is eager to hear our prayers**

John 4:23: Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. (NIV). **Jer 33:3'**Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.' (NIV)

❖ **Avoid legalistic mindset. (The postures, the recitations, the places, the times etc)** e.g. Nehemiah during the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem.

Neh 1:4When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. (NIV)

Neh 2:4The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, (NIV)

Neh 4:3-4Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building-- if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. (NIV)

Neh 4:8-9 they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. (NIV)

❖ **Meaningful prayer is pouring out our heart to God**

1 Sam 1:9-15: ⁹Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. ¹⁰ In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD.

¹¹And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

¹²As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³**Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard.** Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." ¹⁵ "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, **"I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD.** (NIV)

Pouring out our souls to the Lord means that **we say it the way it is.** After all, God is already aware what is in our hearts and we do not have to look for words which we feel are more "prayer – like." **It is more like a child asking something from a loving parent.**

❖ **Wait to hear from God after your prayer.**

3.0 Praying the scriptures

Prayer is difficult for me if I do not study the word of God. Our prayers should not contradict the word of God. Studying the word of God and meditating on it helps us to know how best to pray according to God's will. It is a tragedy that our prayers are usually a shopping list to God. Praying the scriptures is very revitalizing and never boring.

- ❖ **Read the passage inductively**-think about every phrase, every word. If something strikes you, zoom into it. The slow movement from text to prayer and back to the text again forms a kind of rhythm that can hold your attention to God for some time and can stimulate special times of communication.
- ❖ **Read the scriptures aloud where necessary repeat the phrase** (psalms 66:18-20)...if I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.
- ❖ **Identify with the emotions**-(Isaiah 49:15) can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the baby she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! Vs. 16 see, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.
- ❖ **Use a bible commentary** to get the context of the scripture
- ❖ **Personalize the prayer**-(psalms 137:1-6),Eph 3:16-19

4.0 challenges and how to overcome

If you have ever organized for meetings, you must be aware of the popularity of prayer meetings or lack of it. The bible exhorts us to pray without ceasing. Yet a prayerful life is sometimes a challenge.

- ❖ **Lack of time to pray.** We are sometimes too busy to pray! At other times, we are so busy planning and worrying we forget to pray

Possible solution:

- ✓ Multi – tasking: we should learn from Nehemiah who would pray in the course of his duties in the palace
- ✓ Set a time for prayer and be committed to it. The Muslims are such a challenge to us Christians. When the time comes to pray, they close all their businesses, stop their cars and take time to pray. Setting time for prayer was there in the old testament and in the early church
(Psa 5:3) My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Jehovah; in the morning I will direct *my prayer* to You, and I will look up.

(Psa 88:13) But to You I have cried, O Jehovah; and in the morning my prayer shall go before You.

(Dan 6:13) Then they answered and said before the king, Daniel, who *is* of the exiled sons of Judah, has not respected you, O king, nor the ban that you have signed, but **makes his prayer three times a day.**

(Act 3:1) And on the same *day* Peter and John went up into the temple at the hour of prayer, at three in the afternoon.

❖ **Physical, emotional & spiritual exhaustion.**

There are times when we would like to pray, but the physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion is too overwhelming.

(Luk 22:45) And when He rose up from prayer and had come to His disciples, He found them a sleep exhausted from sorrow. **Mat 26:41) Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.**

Psa 55:17 Evening and morning, and at noon, I will pray and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice.

Possible solutions

- ✓ **Continue anyhow!** Dan 9:21, God sent an angel to minister to Daniel after praying for 21 days. Angels came to minister to Jesus after the 40 days in the wilderness. **(matt 4:11)**
- ✓ **This is spiritual warfare, fully engage in it including by prayer and fasting.** The devil fights so that Christians do not pray. **(Psa 35:13)** But when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; **and my prayer returned into my own bosom**

(Dan 9:3) And I set my face toward the Lord God, to seek by prayer and holy desires, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.

Rom 8:26, 34) Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered Jesus is also interceding for us vs.34.

❖ **Doubting that we shall be answered.**

This sometimes is a result of “unanswered” prayers in the past. We should however be fully assured that the Lord does listen to us and hearkens to our prayers.

5.0 Conclusion

Have you noticed how easy it is to pray when in a congregation? How easy it is to lift up your hands and shout out your prayers after a few choruses “that usher us in the presence of God?” Have you experienced the mood of prayer in a congregation? What of when you are alone? Do you worship and pray with the same fever? **It’s important that each individual Christian has a regular personal prayer life.**

Prayer is meant to honor God. God is looking for an intercessor who is standing on the gap on the behalf of our families, our nation, and the world at large. You may not be a full time minister but you are a full-time intercessor. Bad things happen when God's elect cease to keep watch. You and I are watchmen at the tower. Let us move on our knees because this fastest speed to God's heart.