

WHEN YOU STAND PRAYING....



Anyone who claims that prayer is easy has not been at it for very long.

We may have a “prayer honeymoon” when we first encounter Jesus.

Suddenly prayer flows like a river, and awesome things happen. God is answering our prayers almost as fast as we can pray them.

We are like the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. It’s a time of great joy, as God reveals his goodness and his power.

After the Red Sea comes the Wilderness. Suddenly prayer is a mystery. The answers no longer come flying down from heaven.

What’s wrong? Have we lost touch with God? Have we taken a wrong turn?

Not at all. The Wilderness is the place where we learn to walk by faith. We are now in the School of Prayer. The Wilderness is where we are taught to keep praying, even when nothing makes sense.

When we emerge from the Wilderness and enter the Promised Land of faith, prayer becomes the foundation of our walk with God.

Jesus’ promise

Jesus never ceases to promise answers to our prayers. He tells us to keep praying and never lose heart.

***“Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it,
that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”***

***“Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name.
Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full.”***

***“Ask and it will be given you. Seek and you will find.
Knock and it will be opened to you.”***



***“And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night?
Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily.”***

(The “elect” are simply those who cry to him day and night, who are connected to God through prayer.)

Our Lord keeps it simple

If you ask, you will receive.

If you pray, your prayer will be answered.

Jesus never tells us why some prayers are answered instantly and others require persistent repetition.

He just tells us to pray and keep praying, and never give up.

The door to answered prayer

But why should God answer our prayers? What claim do we have on God?

Is it our righteousness?

Is it because we’ve “discovered the secret of prayer”?

Hardly.

The only claim we have on God is his unspeakable mercy.

Behind every answered prayer is God’s forgiveness.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The forgiveness of the cross is our only claim on God.

Forgiveness has opened heaven’s door, so that we can come to the Father and ask.

God answers my prayer, not because I’m worthy, but because he has forgiven me.

Without the unspeakable forgiveness of God, prayer would be impossible.

And our Father does more than forgive us. He sends us help with our prayers.



The Holy Spirit ignites our prayers.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27



As long as we are in these bodies we are “beginners” at prayer.

We never become skilled.

We are never experts.

We are children.

And only when we approach the Father as children (rather than “experts”) do our prayers receive the help of the Spirit.

The Spirit quickens our faith.

The Spirit gives us words.

The Spirit brings our minds into focus.

Every time we pray the Spirit joins us to the cross of Jesus.

And doors open.

But there is one essential which is often missed.

The forgiveness of God needs to rule our hearts as we pray.

When you stand praying

Jesus tells us,

“When you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone.”

Mark 11:25

If there is a trace of unforgiveness in my spirit my prayer is hindered. Just as the Father makes prayer possible through his forgiveness, he expects that forgiveness to rule my prayers to him.

“When you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone.”



What do I do if I just cannot find the strength to forgive some detestable thing that was done to me or to my loved one?

My first prayer needs to be a prayer for help.

“Lord, I’m not willing. But I’m willing to be made willing.”

Then I need to pray for the one whom I cannot forgive.

“Lord God, I’m not sure I can even mean these words. I need your help. But I am praying that you will flood the one I’m thinking of with your fulfilling mercies, meeting all their needs.”

Many of us have found this prayer, taught by Rex Andrews, to be helpful in clearing the way when our prayer is blocked by resentment.

In his teaching about the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus makes clear that God’s forgiveness flows only when we forgive.

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

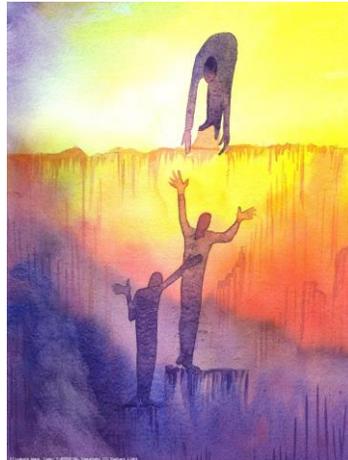
Matthew 6: 14-15

If we’re having trouble with this, we can be sure of our Lord’s help.

We need to lay that bitterness before him and ask him to cleanse it in his blood.

And he will.

“When you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone.”



Prayer- Lord Jesus, we stand before you in your name, in your mercy, in the power of your forgiveness. Give us hearts that do cry to you day and night ... hearts that don't give up, hearts that know you have opened heaven's door for us, hearts that know you extend unbelievable mercy to us. Spirit, help us with our feeble prayers. Give us vision, give us faith, and yes ignite our hearts. And Lord as we stand before you in your tender forgiveness, help us to forgive as well. Pour mercy, conviction, and compassion into our hearts so we can be united in the power of forgiveness which pours from your throne. And Lord, as we struggle to forgive and let go of our bitterness...help us. Flood those who hurt us, those we disagree with and those we don't like with your mercy. Take care of their needs, give them the desires of their hearts. Handle them with the same gentle compassion we ourselves desire. Help us Lord, help us Lord as we stand before you praying.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

