

Vertical Sweat – The Power of Prayer

By Mike Lorence

"Prayer is where the action is." —John Wesley

One of our great privileges and responsibilities as a believer is prayer. First because we need it and secondly because God's people need it. We need it because it connects us to our Heavenly Father and provides a two-way communication. Although God already knows our every thought, He cannot make us fellowship with him. This is a way He has made available to each and every one of us to do that, and since the day of Pentecost we can also do it both with our understanding and in the spirit.

And God's people need it. All the good leaders prayed for the people. Jesus Christ set the standard as demonstrated in John 17:9 (AMP), "I pray for them; I do not pray for the world, but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You." God's people need prayer. God listens to the intercessory prayers of others.

Prayer Marks Spiritual Leadership

There is a lot written about prayer in the Bible. Today we will focus on the aspect of Church leaders and prayer. Although every believer can and should pray, looking at the aspects of prayer from a leader's perspective will provide some unique insights on the power of prayer. We will only scratch the surface of the work that has been and could be done on this single topic. We will look specifically at the prayers of the Apostle Paul and see what he prayed for so that we can focus our prayer life based on the examples given in the Church epistles.

"Prayer is one of the eminent characteristics of strong spiritual leadership."

"A prayerless ministry is the undertaker for all God's truth and for God's Church."

—E.M. Bounds

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

One of the four great components of the 1st Century Church was prayer. The figure of speech *polysyndeton* or "many ands" shows that each element is as important as the others. Prayer is as important as the doctrine, the fellowship and the breaking of bread, yet many times it is the least practiced.

Acts 6:3-4 (KJV)

³ Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

⁴ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

The apostles knew the necessity and worth of prayer to their ministry. They knew that their high commission as apostles, instead of relieving them of need for prayer, they committed themselves to it by a more urgent need that even the care of the needs of the people they were serving. They didn't want some other important work to exhaust their time and prevent them

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from praying as they should so they appointed others to look after the work of ministering to the people so that they could “give themselves continually to prayer...”

Notice that here prayer is put BEFORE the ministry of the Word.

Romans 1:9 (KJV)

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Paul prayed for them “without ceasing.” He was persistent in prayer.

1 Corinthians 14:18 (KJV)

¹⁸ I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

Ephesians 6:18 (AMP)

¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray [with specific requests] at all times [on every occasion and in every season] in the Spirit, and with this in view, stay alert with all perseverance and petition [interceding in prayer] for all God’s people.

Colossians 1:3, 9 (KJV)

³ We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you,

Colossians 4:12 (KJV)

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

It can be seen that prayer was an integral, vital aspect of Paul and other leaders in their caring for God’s people.

Vertical Sweat

So what is “Vertical Sweat?” It is going to God first and putting in the effort or sweat up front rather than going to Him when things are not going well. Going to God is going vertical. Let’s not focus on the “work of the ministry” first then go to God, let’s go to Him first.

Here are some things we can pray for as leaders for God’s people. Putting in the vertical sweat.

1. To be with the believers to help them become established

Romans 1:9-12 (KJV)

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

¹⁰ Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

¹² That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

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1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 (KJV)

⁹ For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

¹⁰ Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

- 2. That they may have wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God**
- 3. To know the what is the hope of his calling**
- 4. To know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints**
- 5. To know what is the superabundance of his power towards the believers**

Ephesians 1:16-23 (Phillips)

¹⁶ I thank God continually for you and I never give up praying for you; and this is my prayer.

¹⁷ That God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the all-glorious Father, will give you spiritual wisdom and the insight to know more of him:

¹⁸ that you may receive that inner illumination of the spirit which will make you realise how great is the hope to which he is calling you—the magnificence and splendour of the inheritance promised to Christians—

¹⁹ and how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God.

²⁰ That power is the same divine power which was demonstrated in Christ when he raised him from the dead and gave him the place of supreme honour in Heaven—

²¹ a place that is infinitely superior to any conceivable command, authority, power or control, and which carries with it a name far beyond any name that could ever be used in this world or the world to come.

²² God has placed everything under the power of Christ and has set him up as head of everything for the Church.

²³ for the Church is his body, and in that body lives fully the one who fills the whole wide universe.

- 6. To be spiritually strengthened with his might**
- 7. To be rooted and grounded in love**
- 8. To be able to fully understand the full dimension of what God has provided**
- 9. To know experientially the love of Christ**
- 10. To be filled with all the fullness of God**

Ephesians 3:14-21 (AMP)

¹⁴ For this reason [grasping the greatness of this plan by which Jews and Gentiles are joined together in Christ] I bow my knees [in reverence] before the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ],

¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name [God—the first and ultimate Father].

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¹⁶ May He grant you out of the riches of His glory, to be strengthened *and* spiritually energized with power through His Spirit in your inner self, [indwelling your innermost being and personality],

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love,

¹⁸ be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God's people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love];

¹⁹ and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God's presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself].

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us,

²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.

11. For their fellowship in the gospel

12. That God will complete and perfect the good work in them

Philippians 1:3-6 (KJV)

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

13. That their love would abound more and more with full knowledge and all spiritual insight

14. That they would be able to distinguish the things which are spiritually best

15. That they would be pure and spotless without offence until the day of Christ

16. That they would be completely filled with the fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ for the glorification and praise of God

Philippians 1:9-11 (KJV)

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

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- 17. That they be filled to capacity with the full and complete knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**
- 18. That they walk a balanced walk that is pleasing to God**
- 19. That they bear fruit and grow up in the full and complete knowledge of God**
- 20. To be strengthened or empowered with all power according to his glorious exerted power unto patience and longsuffering with joyfulness**

Colossians 1:3, 9-11 (Literal according to usage)

³ We give thanks continually to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you

⁹ Because of this [Epaphras’ report], since the day we heard it, we also do not stop praying for you and requesting that you be filled to capacity with the full, complete knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

¹⁰ Thus shall you be able to walk with a balanced walk, being pleasing to God in all good works, bearing fruit and growing up in the full, complete knowledge of God,
¹¹ empowered with all power according to His glorious exerted power, with all patience and longsuffering and joy.

- 21. To be standing fully mature and completely persuaded in all of the will of God**

Colossians 4:12 (AMP)

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. [He is] always striving for you in his prayers, praying with genuine concern, [pleading] that you may [as people of character and courage] stand firm, [spiritually mature] and fully assured in all the will of God.

- 22. Remembering their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope**

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 (AMP)

² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

³ Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

We need prayer too as leaders

Philippians 4:6 (Phillips)

⁶ Don’t worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:7 (AMPC)

⁷ Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately *and* cares about you watchfully.

Don’t allow the cares and concerns of the work of the ministry weigh you down. Cast it all on God.

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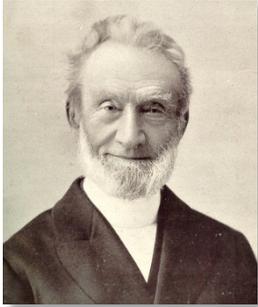
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1 Thessalonians 5:25 (KJV)

²⁵ Brethren, pray for us.

We need prayer from the believers also.

George Mueller



George Müller (27 September 1805 – 10 March 1898) never asked anyone for anything except God through prayer. He started orphanages in Bristol, England caring for over 10,000 orphans. The buildings still stand and are used as schools today. It is estimated that he believed God for \$127 million in today's U.S. currency strictly through prayer. On one well-documented occasion, they gave thanks for breakfast when all the children were sitting at the table, even though there was nothing to eat in the house. As they finished praying, the baker knocked on the door with sufficient fresh bread to feed everyone, and the milkman gave them plenty of fresh milk because his cart broke down in front of the orphanage

"I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lie down and when I rise up. And the answers are always coming. Thousands and tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right and for the glory of God, I go on praying for it until the answer comes. The great fault of the children of God is they do not continue in the spirit of prayer. They do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory they should pray until they get it."