

Prayer Wars

Do you see prayer as a privilege or a duty, a deep pleasure or a daunting battleground? Truly, it can be all of these. Prayer is the channel God has chosen through which to bless His people and accomplish spiritual work. As such, it is absolutely vital to healthy Christian life. God also promises it is powerful and effective (James 5:16). He does *not* promise it is easy, however, nor should we expect it to be.

Prayer is often a battleground, the place where spiritual warfare is either won or lost. And since it *is* powerful and effective, the enemy would have us give up the struggle when it gets difficult. He would have us avoid wrestling in prayer altogether or to fall asleep before the work is done, as the disciples did in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:40). Like them, we will often fail if we rely only on ourselves. So how are we to overcome the opposition and our own weak natures in order to persevere in prayer? It is possible only with God's help.

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him... (Romans 8:26-28)

How reassuring that the acceptability of our prayers does not depend on our limited spiritual understanding and human language alone! But as we increasingly give our hearts and minds over to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our prayer lives grow more satisfying as well as more pleasing to God. We will pray less selfishly, too. Jesus, our perfect example in all things, not only modeled the necessity of prayer, he also prayed for God the Father's will over his own, even when it meant facing the cross (Matthew 26:39).

Do you forget to pray for God's will above all? Are your prayers too often filled with mere fine-sounding words, spoken by rote, instead of true heartfelt devotion? Do they mostly consist of a laundry list of wants and needs, rather than being equally balanced by praise for God's name and character? Or do you neglect to spend time in prayer altogether? Don't be discouraged by past failures; God forgives them when we ask. Then, also ask him for help to carry on the battle until the war is won. *"Lord, teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1)*

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