

THE POWER AND IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

- Today I want to begin a series on the importance of prayer and the *power of prayer to change our circumstances and situations in life*
- There are many blessings that flow out of us having a strong and consistent prayer life
 - i) We maintain peace in our heart and life (Philippians 4:6-7) (Isaiah 26:3-4)
 - ii) We gain wisdom and direction for our life to help us to make good choices that are in line with God's will and best plan for our life (Proverbs 16:3) (John 16:13) (James 1:5)
 - iii) We see God's supernatural provisions and favour
 - iv) We see doors opening that no man can close and miracles happening in our life (Matthew 7:7-8)
 - v) It helps us to be always at the right place at the right time (Psalm 37:23)
 - vi) Prayer helps us to remain strong during the trials and temptations that we will all experience in life
 - vii) Waiting upon the Lord in prayer helps us to renew our strength (Isaiah 40:28-31)
 - viii) Having an intimate prayer life helps the Lord to bring to the surface wrong attitudes in our heart so that we can release them and be free indeed

- ix) We can talk out and express our concerns and hurts to God Who loves us more than any other – This helps us not to become bitter in our trials and **TO EXPERIENCE GOD’S HEALING TOUCH** – Being able to process hurts and offenses is a major key to fully embracing the abundant life that Jesus Christ spoke about – Jesus is always available to us and ready to help heal broken hearts ,
- x) Prayer (talking to the Lord) is the key to having an intimate and fulfilling relationship with God,
- xi) Having an intimate prayer life helps us to become more like Christ as we get to know Him in a very real and personal way

➤ **Prayer is crucial to seeing all that God has planned for our life coming to pass**

- **God’s best plan for our life will always involve taking steps of faith that require His supernatural provisions and strength to succeed**
- **Prayer helps us to *tap into God’s Kingdom resources and power* to help us to succeed in what He has called us to do in life**
- **God has a unique plan for each of our lives, which begins the moment that we come to Christ. His plan for our life is far greater than we could ever imagine**

➤ **The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” (Ephesians 3:20)

➤ **God’s heart and desire is that our lives would bear much eternal fruit and that we would live a life that is full of purpose and great meaning. Jesus made this very clear in His time here on earth. Jesus said,**

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16)

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

➤ **To see God’s best plan for our life FULLY unfolding we need to live a lifestyle of prayer.**

➤ **As we learn to depend on the Lord and pray into being our God given destiny, we will consistently see the miracles and breakthroughs that we need in life to help see all that God has planned for our life coming to pass**

- **To fully embrace all that God has planned for our life requires a bold prayer life as we have a very real adversary, the Devil, who will try and constantly distract and discourage us from fully embracing all that God has planned for our life.**

- **The Apostle Peter wrote,**
“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” **(1 Peter 5:8-9)**

- **But through consistent prayer and continual faith in the bigness of our God, we will see in HIS perfect timing all that He has planned and purposed for our life coming to pass**

- **The Angel Gabriel said to Mary the mother of Jesus,**
“For with God nothing will be impossible.” **(Luke 1:37)**

The LORD said to Jeremiah the prophet when He was languishing in jail,
“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” **(Jeremiah 33:3)**

- **WE MUST SIMPLY CHOOSE TO BE PEOPLE OF PRAYER WHO TRUST GOD WITH AN UNWAVERING FAITH**

➤ **IN DOING THIS WE WILL SEE THE MIRACLES AND BREAKTHROUGHS THAT WE NEED IN OUR LIFE BECOMING A REALITY ON A CONSISTENT BASIS**

➤ **In the book of Hebrews we read,**

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

➤ **TODAY I WANT TO BEGIN SHARING SOME KEYS AND PRINCIPLES THAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE BIBLE IN RELATION TO PRAYER**

➤ **Firstly I must begin by saying that prayer is simply talking to God and involving Him in our life. We must never complicate this fact**

➤ **But today I want to share what the Bible says about prayer to help us all to become people of prayer and POWER – People who consistently experience miracles of provision and favour and breakthroughs as we COMMIT TO SIMPLY FOLLOWING GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR LIFE**

1) PRAYER IS THE KEY TO SEEING OUR NATION EXPERIENCING REVIVAL AND COMING TO CHRIST

All God is looking for are believers who are prepared to stand in the gap for our nation and pray and intercede for God to bring healing and salvation to the lives of those in our nation. When He does we can expect Him to move in a mighty way. All major revivals were preceded by fervent prayer

In the book of Ezekiel we read,

“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.” (Ezekiel 22:30)

In the book of 2 Chronicles we read,

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

God is simply looking for believers to pray for this nation and to seek His face. If we turn our hearts fully to God and cry out for His mercy and healing for our nation, we can believe for this nation to see revival and healing and deliverance and for people to come Christ in great numbers – So many of our young people in Australia need such a touch from heaven – Even one man’s fervent prayers can help to see a nation experience revival. We all need to pray for our nation to be touched by God

2) PRAYER SHOWS OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD WHICH CAUSES HIM TO INTERVENE ON OUR BEHALF

We see two examples of this in 1 Chronicles.

Firstly in the life of Jabez

“Now Jabez was more honourable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.” *(This name of Jabez given by his mother when she was in pain was not a blessing as Jabez means, “He Will Cause Pain”)*

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” So God granted him what he requested.” **(1 Chronicles 4:9-10)**

Secondly we see God intervening when some of the tribes of Israel were at war with their enemies

“The sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh had forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty valiant men, men able to bear shield and sword, to shoot with the bow, and skillful in war, who went to war. They made war with the Hagarites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them, for they cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him.” **(1 Chronicles 6:18-20)**

When we pray to God in faith to intervene on our behalf we can fully expect God to help us.

Whenever we step out by faith to do what God has called us to do in life we can expect God's favour and help as we seek His assistance in prayer

DAVID TOOK ON GOLIATH WHO WAS TAUNTING THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL KNOWING THAT HE HAD ALMIGHTY GOD BACKING HIM AND HE DEFEATED HIM WITH JUST A SLING SHOT AND ONE OF THE 5 SMOOTH STONES THAT HE HAD COLLECTED FROM THE BROOK (Read Chapter 17 of 1 Samuel for this account)

"For with God nothing will be impossible." (Luke 1:37)

3) WE NEED TO CONSISTENTLY MAKE TIME TO SPEND IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (Psalm 46:10) – THE ENEMY LOVES TO STEAL OUR TIME WITH THE LORD

JESUS HIMSELF REGULARLY SPENT TIME IN PRAYER.

**"So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed."
(Luke 5:16)**

JESUS EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF SPENDING TIME WITH HIM. "Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." **(Luke 10:38-42)**

4) WE NEED TO ALWAYS PRAY IN FAITH. WHEN WE PRAY IN FAITH WE WILL SEE THE MIRACLES IN OUR LIFE - (WHEN WE PRAY WE MUST SIMPLY BELIEVE THAT THE PRAYER IS ALREADY ANSWERED AS WE PRAY)

Jesus said.

“Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.”

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”
(**Mark 11:22-24**)

“So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (**Matthew 21:21-22**)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” (**James 1:5-8**)

CONTINUALLY MEDITATING ON THE PROMISES CONTAINED IN THE WORD OF GOD HELPS TO BUILD UP OUR FAITH TO BELIEVE FOR ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (**Romans 10:17**)

5) THE BENEFITS OF ATTACHING SCRIPTURAL PROMISES TO OUR PRAYERS (TO BUILD UP OUR FAITH TO RECEIVE ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS KNOWING THAT GOD'S WORD WILL NEVER RETURN VOID)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:11)

WHEN WE ATTACH SCRIPTURAL PROMISES TO OUR PRAYERS IT HELPS TO BOTH EMPOWER US IN OUR OWN PRAYERS AND TO BUILD UP THE FAITH OF THOSE WHO WE ARE PRAYING FOR TO RECEIVE ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS

6) WE NEED TO LEARN TO ASK GOD FOR HELP, PARTICULARLY WHEN WE ARE BEING CONFRONTED WITH MANY TRIALS AND CHALLENGES IN OUR LIFE. (SO OFTEN WE CAN SPEND ALL OF OUR TIME TALKING ABOUT THE MOUNTAINS IN OUR LIFE, RATHER THAN SIMPLY ASKING GOD FOR HELP AND GUIDANCE)

Jesus said, “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:23-24)

JESUS ALSO SAID,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **If you ask anything in My name, I WILL DO IT.**” (John 14:12-14)

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16)

- 7) WE NEED TO PERSEVERE IN OUR PRAYER LIFE (THE ENEMY LOVES TO DISCOURAGE PEOPLE AND TO STOP THEM FROM PRAYING) – THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT GOD IS BOTH WILLING AND ABLE TO HELP US - BUT HIS WAYS ARE HIGHER AND SOMETIMES DIFFERENT TO OUR WAYS AND HIS TIMING IS ALWAYS PERFECT, BUT SOMETIMES DIFFERENT TO WHAT WE WOULD WANT OR EXPECT – WE MUST SIMPLY PERSEVERE IN OUR PRAYER LIFE AND NOT BE MOVED BY OUR CIRCUMSTANCES KNOWING THAT GOD KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR US**

In the book of James we read,

“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. **Elijah** was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” (James 5:16-18)

In the gospel of Luke we read,

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’”

“And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me’”

Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said, “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?”

“I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” **(Luke 18:1-8)**

8) WE NEED TO PRAY IN LINE WITH GOD’S WILL FOR OUR LIFE - (OUR PRAYERS SHOULD NOT JUST ALWAYS BE SELFISH PRAYERS FOR OUR NEEDS ONLY) – OUR PRAYERS SHOULD BE DIRECTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HELPS US TO KNOW WHAT TO PRAY FOR

The Apostle John wrote,

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. **(1 John 5:14-15)**

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27)

9) THERE IS POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE NAME OF JESUS – WE ARE CHRIST’S AMBASSADORS HERE ON EARTH – WE NEED TO HAVE FAITH IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Jesus said, “And these signs will follow those who believe: *In My Name* they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:17-18)

In chapter three of the book of Acts we read about Peter praying for the lame man that was daily laid at the gate of the temple. We see this after he had asked for alms from Peter and John as they were about to go into the temple.

“Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, rise up and walk.” (Acts 3:6)

“And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.” (Acts 3:7)

When the lame man was healed all the people ran together to Peter and John in Solomon’s porch greatly amazed

As he preached Peter said to the people,

“And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” (Acts 3:16)

The use of another person’s name to declare legal rights is called “the power of attorney.”

This is a privileged power that Jesus has delegated to all believers in confronting sickness and the works of the devil

As believers we have great power and authority when we minister and pray in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

In the gospel of Matthew we read,

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)

“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen” (Matthew 28:20)

As Christ’s ambassadors here on earth we can minister healing and deliverance to people in His Name, the wonderful name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We have great power and authority in His name when we pray for others and for our needs to be met

10) JESUS GAVE US A MODEL FOR HOW TO PRAY (THE LORD'S PRAYER)

“In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the
power and the glory forever. Amen.
(Matthew 6:9-13)

When we look at the Lord's Prayer we can see a number of important aspects of prayer which can help us in our prayer life and in our relationships with the Lord and others

- **Our Father** shows that we can all enjoy personal intimacy with God as we pray to our Father in heaven
- **Hallowed be Your name** emphasises the connection between worship and prayer. (In Psalm 100:4 we read “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”) As we worship God we gain His heart as to what and who to pray for

- **Your Kingdom come** involves us petitioning God to see the establishment of His rule in our lives not just in the Age to Come but in our lives and circumstances NOW. That *His will be done on earth and in our lives and circumstances*
- **Give us this day our daily bread** emphasises Jesus' encouragement to us to ask for those physical needs that we have in life which are all important to our Father in Heaven
- **Forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors** emphasises the importance of maintaining a right heart and short accounts with both God and with others. Just as God forgives us when we confess our sins, we must also be prepared to continually forgive those that have hurt us. In doing this we will maintain good relationships with others and be able to reconcile broken relationships with others

In 1 John 1:9 we read,

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **(1 John 1:9)**

Jesus also said,

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”
(Mark 11:25-26)

- **And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one** is our petition to God to **help us** to remain strong in our walk with the Lord and to overcome all temptations that would come our way in life. Jesus Himself said to His disciples, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)

- **For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever** reminds us as we pray of God’s awesome power and authority and ability to answer our prayers that are in line with His will for our life. “For with God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:37)
Jesus Himself said,
“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8)

11) WE NEED TO LEARN TO DEVELOP A LIFESTYLE OF PRAYER (THAT JESUS CHRIST IS OUR BEST FRIEND AND THE ONE IN WHOM WE CONFIDE MOST – HAVING AN INTIMATE PRAYER LIFE IS A KEY TO CONSISTENTLY MAKING GOOD CHOICES IN LIFE AS WE SEEK THE LORD FOR HIS WISDOM AND DIRECTION IN EVERY AREA OF OUR LIFE)

- **The Apostle Paul wrote, ”pray without ceasing,”**
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

- **LIFE IS FULL OF CHOICES.**
- **The decisions that we make in life can sometimes impact us for an entire lifetime and in terms of our response to Jesus Christ's offer of eternal life, all eternity**
- **We continually need God's wisdom to make right choices in life**
- **God knows what He has planned for our life and what is best for us**
- **God's ways are far higher than our ways. In the book of Isaiah we read,**
"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." (**Isaiah 55:8-9**)
- **Involving God in all that we do by having an ongoing lifestyle of prayer helps to see all that God has planned for our life come to pass. In the book of Proverbs we read,**
"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (**Proverbs 3:5-6**)
- **Having a lifestyle of prayer helps us to continually have peace in our heart and mind as we continually put our trust and confidence in God's faithfulness and ability to help us in life.**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” **(Philippians 4:6-7)**

12) THE IMPORTANCE OF ALWAYS PUTTING THE LORD FIRST PLACE IN OUR LIFE – WHEN JESUS IS TRULY LORD OF OUR LIFE WE CAN TAP INTO HIS PROMISE THAT ALL THAT WE NEED IN LIFE WILL BE ADDED TO US

Jesus Himself said,

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” **(Matthew 6:31-33)**

In the book of Psalms we read,

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **Delight yourself also in the Lord,** And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.” **(Psalm 37:3-5)**

(SOMETIMES IT IS THE TRIALS THAT WE GO THROUGH IN LIFE THAT GOD USES TO HELP US TO COME BACK TO HIM WHEN WE HAVE BEGUN TO BECOME DISTRACTED IN OUR WALK WITH HIM – God has the best plan for our life and truly desires that our lives bear much fruit)

13) THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE – WE MUST SIMPLY JUST DO WHAT GOD TELLS US TO DO WHEN WE SEEK HIS FACE FOR ANSWERS AND DIRECTION IN LIFE

- When we receive direction from God in our prayers we must simply just do what He directs us to do
- As we walk in obedience we will always see God's blessings and miracles in our life
- Faith without works is dead. If God directs us to knock on a door, it is as we knock on that door that we will see it opening
- Even if it does not seem logical we must simply commit to just doing what Jesus tells us to do. God's ways are far higher and so often different to our ways of doing things
- We see this when Jesus told Peter to let down his nets again in the morning (which in the natural was not the best time to fish) after a night of unproductive fishing, but as he did he saw the miraculous catch of fish.

- **We see this account in the gospel of Luke.**

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men.” So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.” (**Luke 5:1-11**)

14) THE BIBLE ALSO MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS THAT CAN HINDER OUR PRAYER LIFE. THESE INCLUDE:

i) Unbelief

In the book of James we read,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” (**James 1:5-8**)

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

We need to simply trust the LORD in every area of our life and pray in faith – God is always both willing and able to help us. Jesus said,

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8)

ii) Praying with any known sin in your heart

In Psalm 66 we read,

“I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.* But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” (Psalm 66:17-19)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;” (1 Timothy 2:8)

It is so important that we always keep the pipeline of communication open between us and God. That we do not allow sinful and critical and judgemental attitudes to lodge in our hearts and that we always seek to have short accounts with God. Having a repentant heart helps us to hear clearly from God and is a key to seeing our prayers being answered. It is so important that we quickly confess any known sin in our life.

The Apostle John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

iii) When our relationships with others and God are not right

It is so important that we have right relationships with others and with God. Jesus made this very clear Himself

“‘And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” (Mark 12:30)

“‘And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31)

“‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’” (John 13:34-35)

Obedience is a key to consistently seeing God’s blessing and favour in our lives and to seeing our prayers answered

Having our relationships right with others and putting the Lord first place in our life is very important to God as He loves to see us relating to Him and to others in a right and loving manner

For this reason it is important that we deal quickly with any offenses in our life and that we do not allow bitterness and unforgiving attitudes to take root in our heart and to develop in our mind

If our relationships with others and with the Lord are not right it will impact on our prayer life and in seeing God consistently answering our prayers.

Jesus Himself said in respect of our relationship with Him being the most important thing,

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**” (Matthew 6:31-33)

In relationship to others Jesus said,

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)

HAVING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS IS THEREFORE VERY IMPORTANT TO GOD

Having right relationships with others is a key to living the life and life more abundantly that Jesus spoke of

Having unforgiveness towards others and wrongly relating to others can hinder our prayers.

The Apostle Peter wrote,

“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7)

iv) Praying outside of the will of God for our life (God knows what is best for us and what His plan is for our life)

The Apostle John wrote,

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, **that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

v) Praying with a wrong motives

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **If you ask anything in My name, I WILL DO IT.**” (John 14:12-14)

- God chose us and appointed us that our lives may bear much eternal fruit

- God has a unique plan for our life
- However if we are not careful the spirit of this world can cause us to become self centred so that even our prayers can become primarily self focused and even prayed with the wrong motives
- God loves to bless us to be a blessing for others
- God's plan for our life is always to live for Him and for others
- When we live for the Lord our prayers will always be to see Him glorified through our life and our testimonies of answered prayer.
- Our prayers need to be always directed by the Holy Spirit and to be in line with God's will for our life. In doing this we can expect answers to our prayers
- However God loves us too much to answer prayers which are made with the wrong motives and that would pull us away from God's best for our life and from having intimacy with Him

vi) God's delays are not always His denials. Sometimes there is timing to His answers to our prayers. GOD'S TIMING IS ALWAYS PERFECT

15) I WILL FINISH THIS TEACHING ON PRAYER BY LOOKING AT THE LIFE OF NEHEMIAH WHO DEMONSTRATED THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER – AS I DO, I WILL JUST BRIEFLY LOOK AT WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM NEHEMIAH IN RELATION TO HIS PRAYER LIFE AND HOW HIS PRAYERS HELPED HIM TO DO GREAT THINGS FOR GOD

- **Most importantly Nehemiah's prayers for his people were motivated by his compassion for his brethren and to see God intervening in their circumstances**

“The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.”

So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” (Nehemiah 1:1-4)

- **Nehemiah knew how big his God was and that He was faithful to His promises. We as believers can position ourselves to appropriate all of God's promises**

“And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,” (Nehemiah 1:5)

- **Nehemiah in his prayers reminded God of His promises. It is good for us to attach scriptural promises to our prayers when we petition God. In doing this it also helps to build up our faith to receive answers to our prayers**
- **Nehemiah was persistent in his prayers. BEFORE HE COMMENCED ANYTHING NEHEMIAH FIRST PRAYED**
- **He repented and asked for forgiveness for the sins committed by the children of Israel**
“please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father’s house and I have sinned.” (**Nehemiah 1:6**)
- **Nehemiah confessed the sins of Israel asking for God’s forgiveness. As Christians it is always good to have a right heart before God and to quickly confess and deal with all known sin in our hearts and lives before we pray for the miracles and breakthroughs that we need in life**
- **As Nehemiah began planning for the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, he prayed to God for His favour in all that he was about to do**

- **Nehemiah prayed,**
“O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” For I was the king’s cupbearer.” (**Nehemiah 1:11**)

- **God granted Nehemiah great favour from that moment on**

- **After making a good start to rebuilding the wall, as they worked together with great unity, the Jews began to experience persecution and opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah (Nehemiah 4:1-3)**

- **When confronted with this opposition Nehemiah immediately prayed to God for Him to intervene**
“Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity!” (**Nehemiah 4:4**)

- **Again when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites were conspiring to attack Jerusalem and to create confusion amongst the Jews, (Nehemiah 4:7-8) Nehemiah again immediately prayed to God**
“Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.” (**Nehemiah 4:9**)

- **Like Nehemiah whenever we are under spiritual attack, or experiencing attempts by the enemy to bring confusion into our lives, we must simply come to God in prayer and seek His protection and help and guidance – THIS IS A KEY TO MAINTAINING ONGOING PEACE AND STABILITY IN OUR WALK WITH THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF THE TRIALS THAT WE WILL ALL GO THROUGH IN LIFE**
- **As nothing is impossible with God, our first priority when going through trials and spiritual warfare in life, should always be to pray to our heavenly Father in the name of Jesus to seek His wisdom and direction for our life**
- **King David also like Nehemiah, always first sought the Lord when he was confronted with great trials in life to get God’s mind and heart on things BEFORE he acted. We see this when all of his family were abducted from Ziklag in Chapter 30 of 1 Samuel,**
“Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way.
So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive.

Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. **BUT DAVID STRENGTHENED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD.**"

Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all." So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the Brook, Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. But David pursued, he and four hundred men; for two hundred stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor. **(1 Samuel 30:1-10)**

"So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives." **(1 Samuel 30:18)**

- **Like King David and like Nehemiah, WHENEVER we are confronted with trials and spiritual warfare, or are in need of direction in life, we must learn to inquire of the Lord and to seek Him for strength and wisdom to meet life's challenges**

- **Because of Nehemiah's intercession on behalf of his brethren and continual prayers when confronted with opposition, the wall around Jerusalem was incredibly rebuilt in just 52 days**
"So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days." (Nehemiah 6:15)

- **How we too must pray into being God's destiny and plan for our life, because the bible makes it clear that through many tribulations we enter the Kingdom of God**

- **Prayer will help to remove the mountains and hindrances that would try and stop us from fulfilling our God given destiny**

- **Jesus Himself said,**
"Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says."

"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." (Mark 11:22-24)