

The importance of prayer



- Prayer is a great key to fulfilling our full potential in Christ and to seeing the breakthroughs that we need in our life
- Having a lifestyle of prayer helps us to lead an overcoming life and to continually make right choices in life. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, “Pray without ceasing,”
(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

I will begin by looking at the life of Nehemiah and the power of a praying man

- Nehemiah heard about the state of his brethren in Jerusalem and how his people had been taken into captivity



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“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.” **(Nehemiah 1:3)**

- Nehemiah was moved to prayer as he heard about the plight of the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“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 1:4)**

When we look at the state of this nation and how many people are addicted to ice, how we need to be also moved to prayer for those who are lost

- Nehemiah prayed fervently and acknowledged the bigness of our God in his prayers



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“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^[a] and observe Your^[b] commandments,” **(Nehemiah 1:5)**

When we speak out God’s promises in His Word and how awesome He is, our faith is built up to believe for miracles and answers to prayers

- Nehemiah was persistent in his prayers as he acknowledged and repented for the sins of his people



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“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)

- We too like Nehemiah need to be persevering in our prayers



- We also need to repent on behalf of this nation. A nation in which so many people have now for many years rejected God. How we need a spiritual awakening in this nation
- How we need to pray for God's hand of favour and blessing to be upon our lives and nation

- Nehemiah prayed for favour



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“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)

- Nehemiah instinctively prayed when confronted with opposition for God’s help and protection

In the book of Nehemiah we read,



“Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, ⁸ and all of them conspired together to come *and* attack Jerusalem and create confusion. ⁹ Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.” **(Nehemiah 4:7-9)**

- Nehemiah had faith in God's ability to answer his prayers



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.” **(Nehemiah 4:14)**

- Nehemiah prayed for strength



- We all will need God's strength and enabling power to complete the tasks that He gives us to do in life. We are all in a very real spiritual contest

In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“For they all *were trying to* make us afraid, saying, “Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.”

Now therefore, *O God,* strengthen my hands.”

(Nehemiah 6:9)



- Nehemiah was persistent in his prayers
- He believed in the power of prayer to change circumstances
- We can see how God answered Nehemiah's prayers each step of the way in the book of Nehemiah after he purposed in his heart to see the wall of Jerusalem rebuilt
- When we commit to doing God's will for our life, we will see it come to pass as we pray and involve God in all that we do

As a result of his persistent prayers:

- God granted Nehemiah favour with the King to go to Jerusalem (He was the King's cupbearer)



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.” **(Nehemiah 2:6)**

- Nehemiah saw God's continual favour and blessing upon his work



- He saw God's continual provision and protection over his life during the work of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, and
- He saw great unity amongst his brethren that enabled the wall to be built without complications and disputes

- As a result of Nehemiah's persistent prayers and God's faithfulness, the wall around Jerusalem was miraculously rebuilt in just 52 days



In the book of Nehemiah we read,

“So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.” (Nehemiah 6:15)

- In the life of Nehemiah we see the results of a man who was persevering in his prayer life

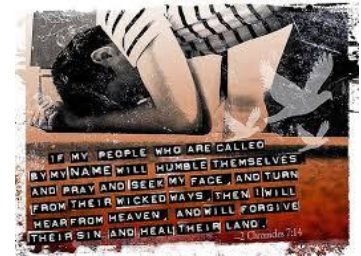


- How we too need to be persevering in our prayers until we see the answers and breakthroughs in our life, so that we can see God's plan for our life unfolding over time
- God has a good plan for each of our lives that is full of purpose and meaning

I will now conclude with some things that we can learn from the bible in relation to prayer



1) Prayer changes our circumstances. Prayer and worship go hand in hand



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)

After being named Jabez (“He Will Cause Pain”) by his mother after she had experienced much pain in childbirth, Jabez prayed for God to bless him and to keep him from pain – In 1 Chronicles we read,



“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 4:10)

- Prayer and worship helps to bring changes to our circumstances – God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3)
- We have a God who both hears and answers our prayers.



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)**”



After being persecuted and beaten for their faith and then thrown in prison after delivering a girl from a spirit of divination, Paul and Silas began praying and singing hymns

“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed.”

(Acts 16:25-26)

- **PRAYER IS A KEY TO SEEING BREAKTHROUGHS IN OUR LIFE**



2) The importance of praying in faith – Believing already for the answered prayer **AS WE PRAY**

Jesus Himself said

“If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” **(Mark 9:23)**



“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)**

Without faith it is impossible to please God –
We need to simply just believe in God’s ability
to answer our prayers as we pray – ***“For with
God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:37)***



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)**

God promises to always give us the wisdom that we need in life if we simply ask for His help in faith



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)**

3) Prayer is a key to remaining strong in our faith

Jesus Himself said,

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”
(Luke 21:34-36)

Prayer helps us to remain strong during our trials and temptations



4) We have power and authority when we pray in the Name of Jesus



Jesus said to His disciples,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18)

As Christians we are Christ’s ambassadors here on earth. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

As believers we have great power and authority when we pray in the Name of Jesus



Jesus Himself 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)**

When we pray in the Name of Jesus we will consistently see breakthroughs and answers to our prayers



Jesus Himself 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)



We see an example of the power and authority in the Name of Jesus and the miracles that we can see when praying in His Name in the book of Acts:

“Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*. And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.” **(Acts 3:1-3)**



“And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, “Look at us.” ⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ 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.” ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.”

(Acts 3:4-8)

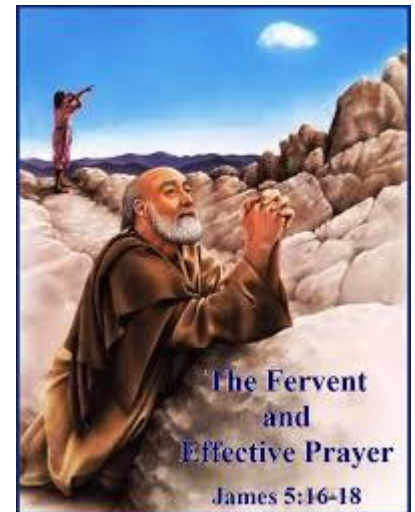


5) God answers our prayers freely because He wants to help us in life

- God is no respecter of people and loves all people equally
- God answers our prayers even though none of us have yet been fully perfected. We are all works in progress. It is only when we get to be with Jesus and have our future glorified body that we will be perfect
- God simply answers the prayers of ordinary people who ***pray in faith for His help***. We see this in the life of Elijah



In the book of James we read,
“...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)**



6) We need to be persevering in our prayers (until we see the breakthroughs)

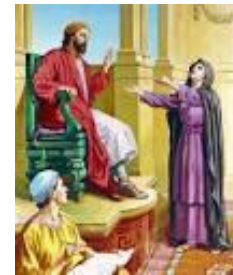


- Jesus emphasised the importance of being persistent in our prayers in His parable of the Persistent Widow. We see this in chapter 18 of the gospel of Luke



“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.’” **(Luke 18:1-3)**

“And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God not 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 18:4-8)**

7) Our prayers need to be in line with God's will for our life



- When we pray in line with what God puts on our heart to pray about, our prayers will be in line with God's will for our life. For this reason our prayers need to be directed by the Holy Spirit

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.” (Romans 8:26)

**When our prayers are in line with God's will
for our life we can be assured that our prayers
will be answered in GOD'S TIMING**



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)

8) Ongoing unconfessed sin and unforgiveness will hinder our prayer life and stop answers to our prayers



- God is more concerned about our relationship with him and our relationships with others being right
- Sometimes God will prolong answers to our prayers until we have addressed areas of sin in our life and made relationships right with others.
The whole Christian walk is one of growing in Christlike character as we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives

The Psalmist wrote,

“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)**



Jesus also emphasised the importance of continually forgiving all people that have hurt us – To walk in forgiveness

“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 a right heart and right relationships with God and others, helps us to consistently see answers to 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)**



The Apostle Paul wrote,

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

- So a great key to seeing our prayers not being hindered is to be quick to confess and forsake all know sin in our life and to be quick to forgive others that may have hurt us



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)

9) Prayer needs to be a lifestyle, NOT just an emergency measure

- Life is full of choices
- We need God's continual help and wisdom to make right choices in life. God's ways are higher than our ways
- God is always willing to give us the wisdom that we need in life (**James 1:5**)



Having a lifestyle of prayer is a great key to maintaining ongoing peace in our life.

This is why 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)



Having a lifestyle of prayer helps us to be continually in the will of God for our life and to see all that God has planned for our life coming 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)

And



10) There is power in the prayer of agreement
(This is just one of the many promises in the Word of
God that we can appropriate as believers)

Jesus Himself said,

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on
earth concerning anything that they ask, ***it will
be done for them by My Father in heaven.***”
(Matthew 18:19)



SO IN CONCLUSION:



- Prayer is a key to seeing God's destiny for our life coming to pass
- Prayer is simply communing with God and seeking His help and guidance for our life
- No situation is ever impossible for God
- How we need to ***learn to take our problems to the Lord in prayer*** and to seek God's help at all times

- God is always willing and able to help us. We need to simply ask for His help
- God is able to open up doors that no man can close
- God knows what is best for us in every area of our life



- When we pray in faith we will see the miracles and answers to our prayers
- So may I encourage you today to become a person of prayer who trusts in the faithfulness of God to help you at all times and especially when you are going through trials and challenges in life
- The bible makes it clear that we can trust in God's faithfulness and willingness and ability to help us at all times



Through prayer we have incredible (unlimited) potential. When we ask God for help He is able to do the impossible in our life. We need to simply ask for His help and guidance in prayer

The word of the LORD came to the Prophet Jeremiah in prison,

**“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”
(Jeremiah 33:3)**

