

The Importance Of Prayer

Stonewall Jackson was a man of prayer. When he wasn't fighting he was praying. In reality, he often prayed when he was fighting. Jackson prayed each morning and every night. He prayed more for his men's conversions than for their victories.

Before the war Jackson began to grow spiritually. With a strong sense of duty he respected his pastor. His pastor encouraged the men to pray. Jackson was unaccustomed to praying. He didn't know how. Stonewall said, "You are my pastor and if you think it is my duty, then I shall waive my reluctance and make the effort to lead in prayer, however painful it may be." The next prayer meeting his pastor called on Jackson. He was so frightened the entire congregation was embarrassed for him! No one asked him to pray again. Later Jackson asked his pastor if he didn't call on him to pray because his first effort was such a failure. His minister admitted that was the case. Jackson replied, "My comfort or discomfort is not the question; if it is my duty to lead my brethren in prayer, then I must persevere in it, until I learn to do it aright; and I wish you to discard all consideration for my feelings in the matter." Eventually Stonewall became a great prayer warrior.

We must become men and women of prayer. In Luke 11:1-13 Jesus illustrated the importance of prayer in four points....

Jesus began with a parable. In the parable a man went to his neighbor at midnight and requested some bread. Hospitality was very important in ancient Jewish culture. A late night visitor prompted this request! Homes in first century Israel consisted of one large room. The family slept together in the center of the room. In verse 7 the neighbor responded, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you." The parable teaches the importance of persistence in prayer. Jesus said, "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs." The word persistent means "overly bold, shameless, annoyingly persistent." God has a surprising desire to answer bold prayers.

Jesus followed the parable with a promise. The promise is so shocking Jesus repeated it twice. In verse 9 and again in verse 10 Jesus said, "And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." God delights in answering the prayers of His children. Jesus said, "Keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on pursuing." Is this a blank check for prayer? No. In verse 2 Jesus said that our prayers must focus on the Father's name, kingdom and will. When our prayers exalt the Father's name, further His kingdom and line up with His will they are guaranteed success.

The parable leads to a promise and the promise leads to a principle. Jesus said in verse 11, "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?" The principle is that fathers delight in giving good gifts to their children. I enjoy giving my children good gifts! Your

heavenly Father delights in giving you good gifts. He gave the ultimate gift- His Son Jesus.

The parable, the promise and the principle all lead to a premise. The premise is in verse 13. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" The moment a person believes in Jesus he is given the Holy Spirit. The premise teaches that God gives much more than we could ever imagine. Someone asks for strength and God gives the Strong One. A person requests guidance and He gives the Guide. Someone asks for help and He gives the Helper.

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