

TEN THINGS I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT PRAYER:

by
Steve Weber

1. God is completely unchangeable, yet moved in infinite love by all things. Soren Kierkegaard

“You who are unchangeable, whom nothing changes! You are unchangeable in love, precisely for our welfare you do not submit to any change: may we too will our welfare, submitting ourselves to the discipline of your unchangeableness, so that we may in unconditional obedience find our rest and remain at rest in your unchangeableness. You are not like a man; if he is to preserve only some degree of constancy he must not permit himself too much to be moved, nor by too many things. You, on the contrary, are moved, and moved in infinite love, by all things. Even that which we human beings call an insignificant trifle, and pass by unmoved, the need of a sparrow, even this moves you; and what we so often scarcely notice, a human sigh, this moves you, O infinite Love! But nothing changes you, O you who are unchangeable! O you who in infinite love does submit to be moved, may this our prayer also move you to add your blessing, in order that there may brought such a change in him who prays as to bring him into conformity with your unchangeable will. You who are unchangeable!” (*The Prayers of Kierkegaard*).

Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Matthew 10:29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.”

James 1:17b “.....coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change...”

2. No one can effectively pray until they have been broken. Pete Grieg

To be able to pray effectively, you must feel comfortable “climbing up into the lap of your heavenly Father.” In order to feel comfortable to do that you must understand:

“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you,” (Matthew 5:4 *The Message*).

“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven,” (Matthew 18:4 NIV).

To have an effective prayer life, we must attain some recognizable measure of the likeness to Jesus in His humility. An empty, broken vessel. Ready to be filled with the spirit of God. The power of prevailing prayer is born out of human weakness and despair.

“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit,” (Isaiah 66:2b).

Jesus said to be gentle and humble...like he is.

Matthew 11:29 “...for I am gentle and humble in heart...”

3. No one who is not a person of prayer can do a great and enduring work for God, and no one can be a person of prayer without giving much time to prayer. E. M. Bounds

“The average congregant spends more time watching television in *one day* than he spends in all spiritual pursuits combined for an *entire week*,” (George Barna: The State of the Church 2002, p. 63).

Pray until you can really pray. (C. H. Spurgeon)

God wants us to move on a progressive adventure in prayer...from monochrome spiritually to full color, surround sound interaction. (Pete Grieg).

Jesus is the only bridegroom I know, whose bride will hardly speak to Him, (Transformation video).

The time we give to prayer is a proof of the interest we feel.

The more we pray, the less worldly we become. The less we pray, the more worldly we become. (Leonard Ravenhill)

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation,” (Matthew 26:41a NIV).

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful,” (Colossians 4:2 NIV).

4. Patience in prayer.....patience in action.

It was so much easier to simply go and do. Now, I spend more time being and less time doing. I am becoming an intercessor, understanding that God has a time table. I am learning to listen. I am learning patience. I am learning faith.

A holy caution that does not permit me to be too hasty.

God purifies our character as we spend time with Him in prayer.

I never **get** time to pray; I've got to **make** time to pray. (15 Star week)

The power of prayer rests in the faith that God hears it.

Obedience and fruit-bearing is the path to prevailing prayer.

You will not find many who can help you in waiting on the Lord. They have put their trust in churches, doctrines, schemes, plans, human devices, means of grace, and divine ordinances.

My eyes, my hands, my feet, my mind, my thoughts, may all be intently engaged in the duties of this life – but MY SOUL – my soul is waiting only upon God. (Andrew Murray)

“If our communities are going to be transformed, it will be as a result of our prayer and our labor with God to bring it to pass.....it will require sacrifice, time, resources, commitment, and responsibility,” Rhonda Hughey.

“Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do,” (Romans 12:2, Henri J.M. Nouwen).

5. “Hesychia,” the rest which flows from unceasing prayer. (Henry Nouwen)

In creased intimacy with Jesus will produce a rest in our souls that protects us from frenzied ministry activity and burnout.

Pastors with no time for silence.

The prayer of the heart: (1) Nurtured by short, simple prayers (Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me). (2) Unceasing (Pass from my lips to my heart). (3) All-inclusive (Intimate relationship between prayer and ministry).

The adoration of God in His glory will of necessity humble the soul into a holy stillness, making way for God to speak and reveal Himself. (Andrew Murray)

Our motivation shifts from being a worker for God. We move from performance based mentality to a rest and contentment to be loved and then serve out of that love.

“Whether we think of, or speak to, God, whether we act or suffer for Him, all is prayer, when we have no other object than His love, and the desire of pleasing Him. All that a Christian does, even in eating and sleeping, is prayer, when it is done in simplicity, according to the order of God. . . . In souls filled with love, the desire to please God is a continual prayer,” (John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*).

“Pray without ceasing,” (I Thessalonians 5:17 KJV).

The call to pray without ceasing is a call to remember Christ’s presence continually in the subconscious as well as the conscious realms of my life. How do we do this? The key is to develop a rhythm, a heartbeat of disciplined prayer, in which I encounter Christ regularly, deliberately, and consciously, (Pete Grieg).

My routine of disciplined prayer enables me to live prayerfully. . . . no matter what activity I am engaged in.

6. Emotional intensity in prayer is in itself no proof of spiritual depth.

Some of us, who really don't know how to pray, are intimidated into thinking we can't pray. Maybe we have been looking to the wrong roll model for prayer. Here is what Jesus said:

“You have seen them in action, I'm sure – ‘playactors’ I call them – treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage.....And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers.....here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet place, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant,” (Matthew 6: 2, 5-6 *The Message*).

During our Ten Days of 24-7 prayer, many people, who are new at prayer, discover something amazing: they don't really need any experience! They come, not so much to pray, but they come.....and find that they have entered into the very presence of God in our 24/7 prayer room.

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to the Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6 NIV).

7. Prayer requires discipline.

“Prayer isn’t what you do before the work. . . . prayer IS the work,” Oswald Chambers.
“Pray until you can really pray,” C.H. Spurgeon.

The comfortable Christian status quo, or a passion for the breakthrough of God’s presence?

Unprecedented Historic Transforming Revival

Wilderness

1. Downshifting into a deeper intimacy with Jesus. (Acts 6:4)
2. Dwelling together in pursuit of heaven sent unity. (John 17).

Status Quo

Doing things for God.

Are we ready to sacrifice the ease and confidence of the flesh for perseveringly waiting on God?

Many of us are too occupied with our work. As with Martha, the very service we want to render the master separates us from Him. (Andrew Murray)

Examen: St. Ignatius of Loyola. Look back over the past 24 hours. (1) Express gratitude. (2) Reflect on how God’s presence might have been made more tangible in that time. (3) Confess failure.

If we are already full of the lesser pleasures of this world, how can we have an appetite for God? (Rhonda Hughey)

Desperation is the underlying fuel that ignites our hearts for unity, prayer, worship, and repentance. To be desperate means to be without hope in your current condition and to know that in your own power you don’t have the necessary resources required to change it. (Rhonda Hughey)

The old paradigm: (1) Polite prayer at the beginning. (2) Do our planning. (3) Ask God to bless what we just planned.

The new paradigm: Waiting on God.

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak,” (Matthew 26:41).

8. To pray effectively, one must have a strong sense of the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

Spirit of unbelief – a denial of God’s nature and His promises.

When I read about all of those “unusual manifestations which come from the supernatural operation of God” in the Bible.....do I believe that any of that is available for the church today?

Ten years in Haiti....turning out to be a great “basic training” in the school of prayer.

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it,” (John 14: 13-14).

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.....you did not choose me, but I choose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” (John 15: 7, 16).

“I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” (John 16:23).

9. One must learn how to listen as well as talk as we pray.

Listening comes first...action comes later.

Two day prayer and fasting retreat.

We have to be cleaned up on the inside before we are going to be much good to others in building the kingdom.

The loss of blessing and power is always caused by the loss of God's presence – and the loss of God's presence is caused by our sin of praylessness.

“Our ministry endeavors should be only in response to what we have heard from the Lord,” Rhonda Hughey.

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know,” (Jeremiah 33:3).

“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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land,” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his Holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.....” (Psalm 24:3-4a).

10. Pray as if it all depends on God.....live as if it all depends on me.

“But much of the time I fly on auto pilot, praying as if it depends merely on me....yet living lazily as if it all depends upon God,” Pete Grieg.

Christian fatalism has largely taken over our approach to prayer.

“No ‘amount’ of prayer will do anything to intensify the desire in God’s heart and persuade Him to act differently.....rather we give time and energy to prayer because it cultivates an environment within us whereby we can know God’s heart and bring ourselves in line with His desires.” (HT March/April 2007)

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.....And will not God bring about justice for his chosen one, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8 NIV).

THE PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

Where do we go from here? What is God saying to me about my personal prayer life? Am I willing to do what it takes to gain the added blessing and power which is always the result of persistence and intercessory prayer?

“The most amazing thing of all has been the hunger, so many people from such different backgrounds just desperate to pray. We’ve never tried to persuade anyone to open a prayer room. People just do! This is remarkable because you can’t make people want to pray. You can make people feel like they ought to pray. You can tell them they should pray. But when thousands of people all over the world spontaneously develop such a longing for God’s presence that they will rise in the night and sacrifice food, such a hunger comes from God alone.” (*Red Moon Rising*)