

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON ELEVEN: MY SPIRITUAL WEAPONS – PRAYER

INTRODUCTION: The best way to learn how to ride a bicycle is to simply get on one, take off, and try not to fall! This same principle can be applied to prayer. The best way to learn to pray is by just doing it. Pray, pray, and pray some more. The more time we spend in prayer, the easier it will be for us.

We are studying about our spiritual weapons. In our last lesson we studied about the Bible. In this weapon, we are going to observe another powerful weapon: Prayer. Prayer is how we communicate with God. He communicates with us through His word, and we communicate with Him by way of prayer. Prayer is just talking to God.

We must understand that prayer is not for God. It is for us. He knows our deepest thoughts. We do not have to say anything for Him to know what we are thinking or feeling. Prayer was designed for us. It is a weapon that God has placed at our disposition and we can either use it or put it away in a closet (this is what the majority of Christians have done for years). If we have faith- we will use it.

Once more, let it be understood that there is no correct formula for prayer. God will listen to anyone who come to Him with a sincere heart. But there are four ingredients that can be included in our prayers that will help us be more effective during our prayer time. The four ingredients are: PRAISE, CONFESSION, INTERCESSION, and THANKSGIVING. Lets take a look at what the Bible has to say about these four ingredients, and make an attempt to include them in our prayer time.

I. THE INGREDIENT OF PRAISE:

We must understand to WHOM we are presenting ourselves when we pray. We are not coming before just anybody. We are presenting ourselves before the God of the Universe!

HEBREWS 4:16 tells us we can come boldly before the throne of God, because we are His children. We can come to His throne because we realize He is GOD! We will come before His throne because we know He is the only ONE who can help us in our time of need.

As we approach the throne of God, we do so with confidence, because He is our Father. However, we do not come before Him with a lack of respect. He is our Creator who has given His life for us. We are His children, but only because of His grace, and we must never forget this truth. None of us can come before God because we deserve to. We can only come before Him because He has so desired. For us to be able to do this is a privilege.

HEBREWS 11:6 indicates that God wants us to believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. He wants us to seek Him and believe Him. If we truly believe that He is the Creator of all things, then we need to tell Him so. He already knows this, but He wants us to confess it. We do not have to do so out loud (remember, He knows our thoughts). However, it is necessary for us to direct our thoughts to Him, no matter whether it be out loud or in thought. If we really thought that God was listening to us, and that He was the answer to our problems, we would spend more time with Him in prayer. God wants us to come to Him in faith, believing! We must come to Him and tell Him how wonderful He is and praise Him for His magnificence!

HEBREWS 13:15 encourages us to offer praise to God always. We must always give Him the "fruit of our lips"!

II. THE INGREDIENT OF CONFESSION

When we approach the throne of God, we must be careful that we do so in humility. We must constantly remember WHO God is and who we are. We are nothing more than sinners saved by His grace. There is one thing that God will not tolerate in our lives: Sin that has not been confessed. When we come to His throne trying to hide our sin (something that is absolutely impossible), we are being disrespectful to God. We are not being sincere with Him. We are being hypocritical, and God will not tolerate such an attitude in His children.

ISAIAH 59:1-2 teaches us that God has the power to do whatever He pleases to do. If He does not answer our prayers, it is because our sins have built a dividing wall between us and Him and He will not listen.

2 CHRONICLES 7:14 explains that there are conditions to God answering our prayers. If we will humble ourselves, pray, and seek Him and turn from our wicked ways, then He will listen to us and answer. But we have some conditions set here. We must make a sincere effort to seek God. And we must remember that God is the boss - not us!

Psalm 66:18 tells us that God will not listen to us if we regard wickedness in our hearts. We must be sincere when we come before Him. We cannot deceive Him.

God hates sin and we know it. When we have fallen in sin, He will not abandon us, But He will insist that we be honest with Him. We must confess our sins, sincerely ask His forgiveness, and when we have done this, He promises to hear our prayers and answer them according to His will.

III. THE INGREDIENT OF INTERCESSION

The purpose of our existence is to honor and glorify God. This purpose is fulfilled when we serve others in His name. Our Lord Jesus said that He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life to rescue others. As His disciples, we should do the same.

Our Lord gave up all His titles in heaven and came to the earth to give His life, being obedient to God the Father. There was not an egotistical bone in His body. All His life was lived to help others. The same should be said of His disciples. Our ministry is to serve God by serving others in His name.

JAMES 4:3 explains that we do not receive what we ask for because we ask selfishly. We are always asking for things that we want. Things that concern our flesh nature. Things for us and not for the cause of Christ and the enlarging of His kingdom.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1 indicates that we must come before God in prayer for all men.

1 SAMUEL 12:23 reminds of the prophet's words, who considered it a sin not to pray for Israel. Jesus has taught us that we are the salt of the earth and lights of this world. It is our task to intercede for mankind.

When we come before God on behalf of others, we need to come with a sincere desire for their welfare. Such was Moses' desire for the welfare of Israel that he said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written" (Exodus 32:31-32). Moses showed true concern for his people. So concerned was he, that his own welfare was not of importance to him.

The apostle Paul has this same feeling. In ROMANS 9:3 the apostle writes: "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of your own race." So great was Paul's love for the Jewish race, that he would have been willing to go to hell, if that would save them.

Our Lord's entire life was one of intercession. In every one of His prayers, we find Him asking for others. If we are His disciples, we will do the same. Our world needs us. It needs us because we are the ones interceding day and night for the welfare of mankind.

IV. THE INGREDIENT OF THANKSGIVING:

Even in our egotism, we do not forget to go to God when we are in trouble. We will always come to Him if it is convenient to do so. But this same egotism does not permit us to show our gratitude. We are experts at asking for things, but very poor at giving thanks.

LUKE 17:11-19 tells us of ten lepers who came to Jesus for healing. He sent them to the Jewish priests to be declared clean. On their way to the priests, all ten were healed. How many returned to thank Jesus? Only one! Do we follow our merry way (like the other nine), and never give thanks? Do we truly believe we deserve God's favor?

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18 teaches us to give thanks in everything, because this pleases God. Once again, it is our ego that will not let us recognize the fact that everything we have belongs to Him, and

that if it were not for Him, we would have absolutely nothing. We should be thankful.

CONCLUSION: We must understand that prayer is simply talking to God. He wants us to communicate with Him. He wants us to take time to talk with Him each and every day. If we use these four ingredients, our time will be well spent, and in good time, we will become prayer Warriors like our Lord Jesus Christ.



SPIRITUAL NOTEBOOK

BIBLE STUDY: We are going to practice the process of Observation, Interpretation, and Application using the following verses.

1. Colossians 4:2
2. Matthew 6:5
3. James 5:16
4. Hebrews 11:6
5. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

PRAYER: Write down the person or things for which you prayed for today.

FELLOWSHIP: Write down the name of the believer you had fellowship with and what you did.

WITNESSING: Write down the name of the non-believer you witnessed to and how you did it.