

WHEN PRAYER WORKS

³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)**

The primary weapon in a born again believer's arsenal is prayer. Paul writes here that this weapon is not of this world, it is in fact supernatural and its sole purpose is to demolish spiritual strongholds

When you pray therefore, you are activating the driving force behind the weapon, which is supernatural by design and powerful by application. Prayer therefore cannot be taken lightly nor can you abuse its power

You are in fact acting as a conduit between earth and heaven by summoning the forces of God to address the issues you are praying about

Coupled with this weapon is the spiritual armour that God knows the believer requires to attend to earthly or human needs

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the **full armor (not part, but all)** of God so that you can take **your stand (you the individual)** against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of **truth** buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of **righteousness** in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the **readiness** that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of **faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of **salvation** and the **sword (word of God)** of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And **pray** in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. **Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)**

Now we can see also that the target of prayer is the devil. We must pray in the Spirit and be covered by the blood to defeat the devils evil schemes

When you open your heart and mouth in prayer, you invoke spiritual forces which direct you. To do this in an immature and unprepared manner, you stand the chance of defeat and being ineffective

Paul advocates 7 (seven) major prayer themes in the New Testament to support your prayer life. These themes require you, the individual, to embrace the character changes in your personal walk in order to be empowered

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| 1. | Spiritual Power: | Ephesians 1: 16 |
| 2. | God's Love and Faith: | Ephesians 3: 14 – 20 |
| 3. | The Knowledge of God's Will | Colossians 1: 9 |
| 4. | A Discerning mind | Philippians 1: 9 |
| 5. | To be Upright and Holy | 1 Thessalonians 3: 13 |
| 6. | To be Blameless | 1 Thessalonians 5: 23 |
| 7. | To Endure in Obedience | 1 Thessalonians 5: 17 |

When lifestyle and motives are wrong, God does not hear nor answer

James 4:3 (NIV)

³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Ezekiel 8:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them.”

Jeremiah 7:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ “So do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you.

Proverbs 1:28 (NIV)

²⁸ “Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me.

Job 30:20 (NIV)

²⁰ “I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.

The Word of God is the manifestation of His Will, which empowers an individual in his/her act of obedience to “[Selfless and Unconditional service](#)”, through which the [supernatural wisdom](#) and [revelational knowledge](#) of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God is revealed to us i.e. mankind.

This empowerment by the Word:

- a) It is not related directly to (one’s) ability nor is it given as reward for prior success or achievement (Moses)
- b) It does not require interpretation or understanding and is indiscriminate (Balaam and the donkey)
- c) Is not of this world or for this time! It is unrelated to our works but comes through need according to belief
- d) Is the ultimate God given gift!
- e) Is above and beyond our human understanding

It prepares the anointed to enter into the presence of God

The key to unlocking this spiritual wealth is the constant pursuit of excellence through prayer and a God surrendered lifestyle. It is not that you pray that matters to God, but how you pray!

Prayer is the key, not just a key. We have been promised an abundant and fulfilled life, therefore we must have the mind to embrace it, so that we can walk in it as a statement of our faith

Is it not strange that despite the fact that the Word of God says that we will receive whatever we ask for in God’s name (according to the recorded word of **John 15: 16**), that in fact this does not happen.

I know that the qualification for an abundant and effective prayer life is “**love**”, but not all prayers require us to act in love.

By this I mean those prayers that are spoken in secret for ourselves and which do not require external intervention.

These prayers are more often than not, not answered in the way we have made our supplications before God.

The answer could lie in the fact that we function as stillborn Christians, with infant mentality regarding spiritual matters and a conformed mind subjected to the constant pounding of humanistic values

Now we have to make prayers on behalf of the church and mankind as a whole, without the real conviction of success.

We pray when we are asked to and sometimes when we are convicted to be the Spirit of God.

This often comes across merely as a service provided. Unlocking the power of the word requires a transformed mind and the integration of God's values into one's daily lifestyle

The latent power of the mind must be nurtured and stimulated in order to function. The Word of God says that people do not hear because they do not have faith (faith comes from hearing – **Romans 10: 17**), because they hear and see, but nothing changes (**Matthew 13: 14 – 15**).

So! What must we do and change in order to have a prayer life that works?

I have identified 7 areas to address for a powerful prayer life

1) Prayer is a condition of life and subject to conditions. I have identified (three) key criteria;

- **Timing** – by this I mean, the scenario, the audience, the urgency
- **Circumstance**, by this I mean, the prevailing conditions, preparedness, the reception, the expectation
- **Objective**, by this I mean, the desired outcome, the impact, the motivation

You could pray when all these factors are in alignment and still the desired outcome is not achieved. This is because, despite the fact that the motivation and desire is great, it may not be in God's will, His timing, His "bigger picture" purpose, etc.

We are reminded in 1 Corinthians 13 that we only have a partial understanding of spiritual events at present

There are times when we confuse human emotion and expectation with spiritual reality and truth

The more electric the atmosphere, the greater the heightened expectation, the more the individual (the five-fold minister) would be inclined to push the limits of his calling and anointing.

This is when the man moves out of the spirit into his own ability and human understanding

Prayer is the medium through which God communicates with us (**Romans 8: 26 – 27**), which in turn allows us to communicate back to Him. God's will is revealed to us through prayer

In Psalm 37:4-5 (NIV) we read:

⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

The Word tells us to wait upon the Lord (Isaiah 40: 31 and Luke 24: 49).

In John 17, we are given a promise and a duty! *We will go one day to be with Jesus, but we must continue to make Jesus known until we are recalled*

2) Prayer must be subject to the terms of the covenant given by God to mankind through Moses.

We must just accept that certain things are not meant for us now and possibly not ever. These are the mysteries of God.

Look at what God tells Moses (firstly) to command to the people (secondly) in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Bible, written in the form of a farewell address by Moses to the Israelites before entering Canaan and containing a repetition of the Ten Commandments and most of the laws in **Exodus 21- 4**.

Comes from the Greek word “*deuteros nomos*” meaning second law, a copy or duplicate of this law or “the repetition of the law” (We can call this the repeated law).

So, let’s read from Deuteronomy 17: 14 - 20

Deuteronomy 29 (NIV) Renewal of the Covenant (Repetition of the Law)

*¹ These are the terms of the **covenant** the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb. ² Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:*

*Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to **all** his officials and to all his land. ³ With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders.*

*⁴ But (KJV says Yet.) to this day the LORD **has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear***

Now to verse 9

Remember that they have heard with their ears, have seen with their eyes, have smelt with their noses, have touched (connected) with their bodies and their hearts and have tasted with their mouths; What! The presence and glory of the Father heart of God

Why would God now decide to develop these spiritual senses in mankind?

- **For What (To all as a legal requisite to obey its Terms and Conditions)**

*⁹ **Carefully follow the terms** of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do.*

NB! God is our covenant father and we are required to love and obey him, so that we may participate in the inheritance set aside for all who call Him Lord. We are a new root with a new vision. We are a new creation and a royal priesthood, a holy nation set aside for Him (God), we who believe

- **To Whom (To all and sealed with an oath)**

*¹⁰ **All of you** are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹ together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water.*

*¹² You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and **sealing with an oath**,*

NB! God includes everyone (*all of you*) in His promises, firstly those who He calls “His people” (the Jews) as well as everyone who believes in Him and His message to His people and the nations (Gentiles or *aliens*).

Furthermore, He seals it with an oath that cannot be reversed By Himself, only by the individual, through unbelief

- **Why (To confirm God’s promise)**

*¹³ to **confirm** you this day as his people, that **he may be your God as he promised** you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

*¹⁴ I am making this covenant, with its oath, **not only with you** ¹⁵ who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but **also with those who are not here today**.*

*²⁹ **The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.***

Here we can clearly see that the oath is sworn to those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

We also see that there are certain things that God will not, or has not yet revealed.

These things are controlled by God, which are beyond our understanding and hidden for a chosen time as a prophetically foretold event. We see this in Daniel and Revelation regarding the sealed prophecies

Some things which we can understand and which give the believers hope and encouragement, has however only been revealed to the discerning spirit and heart (eg, the explanation of the parable of the sower)

David shows understanding of the discerning mind to which God communicates His intentions in Psalm 51: 16 – 17

He points to being **broken** (lowly and submissive) and **contrite** (penitent and remorseful)

We must not worry about such things which are sealed by God for a time and place of His choosing. We must focus only on what is revealed and which we know to be truth (promises and revelations)

We read how Jesus confirms this covenant truth in **John 17**, when He prays to His Father in Heaven and affirms at the same time the pattern of a powerful prayer life is as follows;

- 1) **Self (I must pray for my own life, my ministry, my needs, my spiritual tools)**
- 2) **Believers (the Saints, the body of Christ, the believers) and then**
- 3) **Others – being the World – “the all nations” (the Lost, unsaved, backslidden, sinners).**

We can see that we are obliged to pray for others, even for those who persecute us!

Here is a lesson for people who pray for different things all the time. Paul tells us to pray continuously (1 Thessalonians 5: 17). This means that we must continue in our prayers, before, during and after our needs or requests.

3) Prayer must elevate your faith to a higher level of understanding and right into the presence of God.

If it does not, then one can safely assume that there are areas of one's life that does not make the grade in terms of purity and spiritual righteousness (in other words, sin is alive in aspects of the person's life)

Sin is the greatest enemy of a person's prayer life. Where there is sin, there is no faith and without faith it is impossible to please God, therefore we will not evidence the unseen things hoped for.

Can you see how our lives are like a giant jigsaw puzzle? Each action has a potential reaction, which kicks off a whole chain of events.

We fear what we don't know or understand and follow walked paths!

Paul refers to this as the transformation of the mind being renewed over time, in order to achieve a state of perfection in the Spirit which is good and pleasing to God. This is the acceptable and reasonable sacrifice of every discerning believer in Jesus Christ (Romans 12)

Daniel prayed and fasted and travailed and lamented and enquired and separated and got sick **and** then he received his answer directly from God through both Gabriel and Michael. While Daniel prayed, Gabriel, Michael and the angels were fighting through the obstacles to breakthrough. Now we can see why the battle belongs to the Lord. We pray God into action

4) Prayer must rise above human wisdom and reasoning into the realm of the supernatural and the spiritual unknown.

The author of the book "The Power of the Praying Wife", Stormie Ormatian, gives the following advice regarding prayer;

'What could I accomplish today if I allowed God to work through me? What would you see? Think of something you want to do beyond what you can do (or think you are capable of) and pray for that'

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians (Chapter 3: 20), he exhorts the church with these words;

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

This is what real prayer is, **to understand and to know, to believe in your heart without doubt or fear!**

5) Prayer must be directly proportional to the need.

Our prayers appear to be seldom answered because we are "ambush" prayers. We have no real conviction about intercessory prayer because we have so many issues ourselves. **Why go and fight another person's battle, when your own life is a war zone.**

If you do not bear the conviction and associated baggage when you commence, you will re-evaluate your commitment and participation during the process, which may cause you to become angry, abusive, judgemental, or possibly even give up.

Prayers offered must match the intensity of the need. If a person is dying, critically ill or in mortal danger, a basic short and “in passing” prayer will not suffice. No! You will need to meet fire with fire and tackle the problem with the same intensity as the threat against that person.

Such prayers (called Travail or warfare) must be supported on the following spiritual pillars;

1) Circle of prayer unity. (Psalm 33 and James 5: 14)

When you ask for prayer support;

- Pray together as one
- Agree upon the desired outcome expected
- Wait upon the Lord for direction
- Seek His will for the situation
- Do not let others contradict your prayer strategies

2) Fast while you pray (Isaiah 58)

Before, during and after the fast;

- Agree on the terms of the fast
- Have understanding for the motive of the fast
- All fast simultaneously and with committed enthusiasm
- Do not let others contradict your fast strategies
- Accept the outcome irrespective of your expectations
- Do not be offset by negativity (Noah, Moses)
- Ask for confirmation

3) If the prayer is for yourself, or you are burdened, set yourself apart

- Set yourself apart
- Do not give interim reports
- Wait until the full answer is given, not just after a victory
- Expect confirmation of the outcome

4) Seek to gain greater understanding and insight (Building blocks)

- Search for understanding in all situations
(Parable of the Sower Matthew 13: 10-11 and Jesus talking of His death – John 17)
- Act only upon the truth, which will set you free (John 14: 16, 16: 13; Philippians 4: 8)
- Set your hearts on things above this worldly distractions (Colossians 3: 1)
- Be transformed through the renewal of your mind (Romans 12: 2)
- Learn from both negative and positive situations

5) Pray until you get an answer

- Do not be distracted
- Don't give up until you get breakthrough
- Make sure that the answer you think you got is from God
- Be in agreement regarding the solution
- Accept the answer, even if it is not what you expected or want

6) Prayer means to “be moved to or travel to”

- Pursuit of excellence through study
- Arduous labour “as in the pains of childbirth”
- Time consuming commitment
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6) Prayer attitude must always be about change, with the emphasis on self (Change **Me).**

The prayer which Jesus taught us through His disciples is about the individual laying his life open before the Lord! It is not about prayer for or against others, which requires no imagination or soul searching. These soulish prayers keep you at “ground zero”! No altitude, no attitude! You can not fly if you can not take off!

Matthew 6:9-14 (NIV)

⁹ *“This, then, is how **you** should pray:*

”Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*¹¹ Give **us** today our daily bread. ¹² Forgive **us** our debts, as **we** also have forgiven our debtors.*

*¹³ And lead **us** not into temptation, but deliver **us** from the evil one.’ ¹⁴ For if **you** forgive men when they sin against **you**, your heavenly Father will also forgive **you**.*

7) Prayer is the 7th and final component of our armour Ephesians 6:14-18 (NIV)

*¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of **truth** buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of **righteousness** in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the **readiness** that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of **faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the **helmet** of salvation and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And **pray** in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Prayer is not merely an instrument of communication! It is the power unto salvation!