

passage, that to ask in His name is to ask on His authority, His power of attorney, as it were. He obviously can't and won't give us such authority unless we're asking for what He wants us to have.

So our chief concern in prayers of petition and intercession should be to accept what God wants without concern for what we want. Only then can we claim His prayer promises. As we come closer to the heart of God, we'll find petitions for ourselves and intercession for others becoming more a spontaneous reaching out for the will of God to be done. This will displace the former pleading with Him to conform to our wishes. We'll find ourselves increasingly abandoning our desires, purposes, goals, and ambitions for His. Prayer will become more nearly the beating of our hearts in tune with the heart of God.

The Place of the Written Word

We know nothing for sure about God or things eternal or spiritual apart from the divine revelation of His Word. We have no other basis for our prayer life than the written Word. We know the character of the God with whom we have relationship only by His Word.

Right here, some who would seek the Lord are stymied. They never take time to learn what the Word reveals about the character of God, foolishly holding onto their own twisted concepts of what God is like. If we are to learn to walk with God in a Christianity that really works, we need to give a priority place to finding Him as He is in His Word.

We need to know and understand what God is really like, to see Him revealed in all His beauty and attractiveness to the blood-bought soul. Feed your heart and thoughts by reading carefully the biblical revelation of the Lord and its call to worship Him. Let Him teach you who He really is in His infinite perfection, how He works, and what

His will is. Get a good topical Bible and read the passages about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

You may find encouragement from literature that genuinely points you to the Lord. However, don't get so wrapped up in what others have to say that you miss the voice of the Lord speaking through His Scriptures.

Let the Word Be Your Guide

Occasionally in your time of devotional prayer, you may feel that God has revealed something special to you. As great as this is, it may feed your pride and encourage your spirit of independence from the Lord. You may even be misled.

Keep your Bible, concordance, and other helps for Bible study handy. Whenever you feel that the Lord has taught you something, however delightfully new, submit it to the Lord, and verify it from His Word. If you can't verify it from the entirety of the Word of God, lay it aside until you can. To proceed without that confirmation is dangerous in the extreme and never permissible.

Further, the confirmation must be genuine. To impose your revelation on Scripture and try to make Scripture say what you want it to say is wrong and can lead you into being deluded and others being deceived.

Submit everything to the written Word. Never proceed against its direction.

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By: Pastor Ron Marr

“Do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 12:29-34

Have I seemed to imply that all our prayer time will be consumed with giving the Lord and matters eternal and spiritual all our attention? Perhaps it seems that way. As we learn to seek Him, a much larger proportion of longer prayer periods than we ever previously dreamed will be devoted to Him alone.

When we've let go of everything into His care, praised and worshiped Him only, and rested ourselves in Him, at that moment to ask anything for ourselves may be offensive to our spirits. But, of course, the time spent apart with the Lord includes more than the prayer of devotion or communion.

We have seen that devotional prayer itself may contain, in addition to the seeking of God for Himself alone, instruction and correction, repentance and confession. To be complete, prayer will also include what many have surmised composed all of it: intercession, petition, and prayerful Bible

DIMENSIONS OF TRUE PRAYER

study.

The Role of Intercession

“You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you, And you will pay your vows. You will declare a thing, And it will be established for you; So light will shine on your ways. When they cast you down, and you say, Exaltation will come! Then He will save the humble person. He will even deliver one who is not innocent. Yes, he will be delivered by the purity of your hands.”

Job 22:27-30

Our emphasis has been on devotional prayer, seeking the Lord for Himself alone. In this way He may become to us all He longs to be, the very center and circumference of our lives. As He fills us, He then simply overflows into the lives of others. Joy replaces the awful stifling compulsion that characterizes so many Christians' lives.

But the heart tender to the Lord simply can't avoid prayers of both petition for personal needs and intercession. Even if you wanted to, you couldn't resist the urge! If you fail to spend time in prayer for the needs of others, you'll certainly find the Holy Spirit reminding you of this responsibility.

You may have felt petition and intercession have been neglected in this book, and I want to see they have their proper place in your heart. Father God wants you to come to Him with all your personal needs and cares. In times of intercession, you may discover as much blessing for yourself as for those for whom you pray. As God gives you a genuine, heart concern for others, you may find great release in your own spirit to respond to His Spirit.

However, if you're not ready for a serious minis-

try of intercession, there's no need to put yourself under bondage. Simply commit it to the Lord to open this door to you in His own way and time. Intercession may become one of the great joys and privileges of your life.

What about Petition?

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

John 15:7

How can God make such a promise? When your heart is submitted happily to the Lord and His pleasure, your will matches His.

But be careful. Our deceitful willfulness and self-pleasing knows no bounds. The danger in prayers of petition is, first, that they tend often to reflect our selfishness and lack of submission to the Lord, His interests, and His will. Second, they often are accompanied by anxious worry. We've already characterized worry as the sin of mistrust.

When our supplicatory prayers are submitted to His will, we'll often recognize that we don't know what He wants in a given situation. We'll pray simply that He'll do all that will glorify His name, or that He will do better for the person for whom we're concerned than we could ask or think.

Nonetheless, we need to believe God honors specific prayers for specific needs and surely answers every prayer prayed in His will. We need to live in constant restful anticipation of His intervening on behalf of His trusting children and those they entrust to His care.

I get a lot of satisfaction out of just committing people or circumstances into His care, and leaving them there for Him to do with exactly as will best please

and praise Him. I don't see the purpose of asking God to do things I'm not confident He wants to do. So I'd rather give the person or matter into His capable hands and caring heart.

Today I talked to the Lord about a lady I've mentioned whom I hadn't heard from for a while. I was concerned and wanted to hear from her again. I did. The day before yesterday the same thing happened with someone else. Yes, the Lord cares about even our smallest concerns. The problem is that especially in what we see as big concerns our self-will shows up and inhibits God's response.

The issue is not nearly so much the words of prayer but the heart of trust. Let us trust Him always “to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20), that He may receive eternal praise.

A Heart in Tune with God

When our hearts are being attuned to the Lord, we naturally share more and more of what comes our way with Him whether in words or in spirit. When we're attuned with Him, we'll want to be sure that what we want is what He wants, whether for ourselves or others.

Having established that we want what He wants or are allowing Him to change us so we do, then we can confidently expect that what we both want is what He'll give us.

It's abominable how we've abused the statements of our Lord that He'll give us whatever we ask in His name. James 4:3 clearly states that we mustn't expect to get what we ask for selfishly: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” We should always have realized, even without this