

# HOW

## YOU CAN PRAY WITH CONFIDENCE

By Bill Bright



## How You Can Pray With Confidence

Published by  
Bright Media Foundation  
P.O. Box 203  
Erie, CO 80516

ISBN 1-56399-109-8

© 2002, 2024 Bright Media Foundation. Formerly, © 1971, 1981, 1995, 1988 Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, except in the case of brief quotations printed in articles or reviews, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*, © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society.

Scripture quotations designated the TLB are from *The Living Bible*, © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

Scripture quotations designated NKJ are from the *New King James* version, © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee.

Scripture quotations designated NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, by the Lockman Foundation, La Habra, California.

# CONTENTS

**You Can Change the Lives of Men and Nations**

**Answers To Your Questions on Prayer**

**How You Can Pray With Confidence**

**Tapping the Source of Power**

**Self-Study Guide**

**Group Discussion Questions**

# HOW You Can Pray With Confidence

By Bill Bright

## You Can Change the Lives of Men and Nations

**H**ave you ever considered that you have immediate access to the most powerful Person in the universe?

During the last forty years, I have had the honor and privilege of meeting several presidents of the United States.

Every president has a very heavy schedule and tens of thousands of friends and supporters who would like to be invited to meet with him. Because of limited time, only a few are invited. Those who are must go through meticulous security checks before they are allowed to meet with the president.

As a child of God you have the opportunity for an instant audience with the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the President of presidents. Whatever the need, whatever the time, His calendar is cleared to be with you; His schedule is open for your appointment; His full attention is devoted to you.

Not only do you have the ear of the greatest person in the universe, but has it ever occurred to you, as you kneel in your place of prayer, that you have been given the privilege of being used of God to help change the lives of individuals and nations? God has literally made available to you His vast reservoir of power, wisdom, love, and grace, if only you are willing to believe Him, to trust and obey Him.

## Answers to Your Questions on Prayer

**W**e have learned through the years that the average Christian does not know how to pray. A friend of mine who has been a Christian for more than fifty years told my, “I never pray in public, and I know very little about prayer or how to pray.” Because so many Christians—new and old alike—know so little about prayer, I wish to share with you some simple, basic truths and answer some vital questions about prayer.

## What is Prayer?

Someone has said, “Prayer is a dialogue between two people who love each other—God and man.” Simply put, prayer is communication with God. Every Christian has a direct line of communication with God, available at all times. But most Christians never lift the phone off the hook and often forget the line exists until an emergency arises.

Prayer is much more than words, however. It is an expression of the heart toward God. It is an experience, a relationship, not an activity.

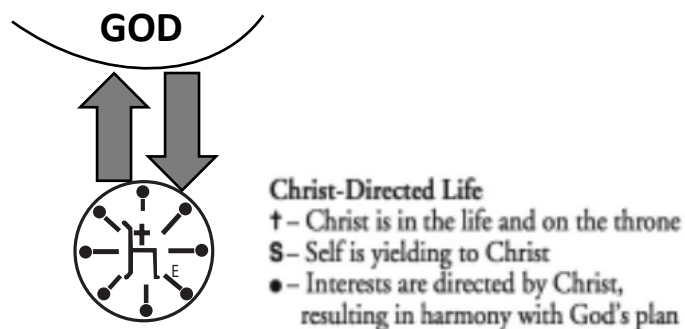
As a child of God, you are invited to come boldly before His throne. “Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” Paul writes, “let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:14,16).

Because the one to whom you pray is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Creator of heaven and earth, you come into His presence with reverence. But He is also your loving heavenly Father who cares for you and delights in having fellowship with you. Therefore, you can enter into His presence with a relaxed, joyful heart, knowing that God loves you more than anyone else has ever loved you or will ever love you.

To me, real prayer is simply communicating with God, inviting Him to talk to you as you talk to Him. There is more to prayer, but this is basic to true prayer.

## Who Can Pray?

*Anyone can pray.* However, only those who walk in faith and obedience to Christ can expect to receive answers to their prayers. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus promised to those who belong to Him, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14).



Man instinctively prays whenever he is faced with tragedy, heartache, sorrow, or danger—even if only to false gods made of wood, stone, or his own fallen imagination.

But serious danger exists in this. People always assimilate the moral character of the objects they worship. Those who worship gods of lust, for example, become morally degenerate. Those who pray to gods of blood, fire, and war become militaristic, ruthless, and sadistic. Those who bow to the god of materialism become greedy and self-centered. Prayer to anything or anyone apart from God through our Lord Jesus Christ is forbidden. God's Word declares:

*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts... (Romans 1:22-24).*

Paul writes that "anyone who comes to him [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). By coming to Christ and worshipping Him, you are changed into His image:

*We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 2:18).*

This explains the scriptural emphasis on the worship of and prayer to the only true, righteous, holy, and loving God.

According to the Scriptures, "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men..." (1 Timothy 2:5,6). Jesus Himself claims to be the only way to God. He says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:16).

Does this sound too exclusive? No. Jesus Christ came to give His life for all people in all lands. He promises rest for all who are weary and burdened (Matthew 11:28). Many people who have ignored God for a lifetime come to a difficult situation near the end of life and are too embarrassed to turn to Him in prayer. They reason, "I've ignored God all my life—it's too late now."

Do not feel this way. God listens to the prayer of any truly repentant individual. He proved His love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still in our sins. There is nothing that you or I can do that will cause God to stop loving us (Romans 8:38,39).

The fact still remains, however, that you cannot expect God to answer your prayers unless you come to Him in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus as your only mediator and confess your sins and receive Him as your Savior and Lord (John 10:9; Romans 10:9,10; 1 John 1:8-10).

*Those who have clean hearts can pray.* You not only must ask in the name of Jesus, you must also come with a clean heart. The psalmist says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Psalm 66:18, NKJ). Therefore, you cannot expect God to answer your prayers if there is any unconfessed sin in your life. Just as the omission of one ingredient in a cake recipe can result in failure, so the omission of confessing any known sin can result in prayer failure.

*Those who have a forgiving spirit can pray.* One of the most frequent hindrances to prayer is an unforgiving spirit. Jesus said, “When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25). In our Lord’s prayer, Jesus links forgiveness and prayer for our daily needs: “Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debt, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:11,12). No prayer except the prayer of confession can be answered by God unless it comes from a heart that is free of unforgiveness and bitterness.

The well-worn compromise, “Well, I can forgive, but I can’t forget,” only defeats your prayers. What if that were God’s attitude? His love has prompted a wonderful forgetfulness in which He has pledged to put all of your sins behind His back and remember them no more. You and I must come to God with a forgiving heart if we are to receive the Christian’s legacy of power in prayer.

*Those who pray in faith can pray.* You must also have a believing heart if your prayers are to be answered. The same Lord who says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18,20) also says, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14), “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:22), and “According to your faith will it be done to you” (Matthew 9:29). Yet few of us take these words seriously, and few dare to claim what God has so generously promised us.

## **Why Are You to Pray?**

*You pray because God commands you to pray.* The New Testament commands to pray are many. Here are a few:

- Pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- Watch and pray (Luke 21:36).
- Pray with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2).
- Pray in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15).
- Always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1).
- Pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:2).
- Pray for boldness (Acts 4:29).

*You can pray because of our Lord's example*, Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, was obedient in prayer. Although His day was filled from morning to night with many pressures and responsibilities—addressing crowds, healing the sick, granting private interviews, traveling, and training His disciples—He made prayer a priority. If Jesus was so dependent on this fellowship in prayer alone with His Father, how much more should you and I spend time alone with God!

*You pray because of the examples of the disciples and others*. The lives of the disciples and the biographies of Christians who have been mightily used of God through the centuries all testify to the necessity of prayer. They, too, are examples of obedience to His command to pray.

I'm not suggesting that you need to spend long hours each day in prayer, though some are called to this high privilege. But you can "pray continually," bringing everything to God in prayer. Those who obey God's command to pray are mightily blessed and used of God.

*You pray to have fellowship with God*. God waits anxiously for you to come to Him in prayer. Proverbs records, "The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Proverbs 15:8 NKJ). This should motivate you to spend more time with our Lord because you wish to please and delight Him.

My own sons help me to realize the importance of this fact. No matter how busy I am, when Zachary or Bradley want to talk with me, I gladly put aside everything else just to have fellowship with them. I long and love to be with them, and I am always grateful when they want to be with me.

One day, many years ago as I was studying in our home, Zachary appeared with a stack of books and sat down across from me at the table. Although neither of us spoke, I sensed the warmth of his love.

I finally broke the silence by saying, "Zac, I want you to know how much it means to me that you have come to sit with me."

He replied, "Daddy, that's the reason I came. I just want to be near you."

For the first time in my life, I really understood how the great heart of our loving God delights in us and longs for our fellowship.

*You pray to communicate with God*. He said, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3). Prayer is not just an "escape hatch" for you to get out of trouble, please yourself, or gain your selfish ends. It is your line of communication with God. As His child, you have direct access to His throne. He loves you so much that He has made Himself available to you at all times. Through prayer you talk to God and He responds to you.



*You pray to receive spiritual nurture.* Just as a child needs food to grow physically, so you need food to grow spiritually. You can miss a meal and not feel any ill effects, but if you go without food for a week, you begin to weaken and run out of energy. So it is with your spiritual life. You can go through one day without feeding on God's Word or praying without any apparent ill effects, but if you continue this practice, you will become undernourished, losing the strength to live a victorious life and to maintain the boldness necessary for a vital witness for Christ.

*You pray to obtain results.* Genuine, biblically based prayer does change things. It so changes those who pray that God is free to reveal His will to them. Prayer also releases God's great power to change the course of nature, people, and nations. The faithful prayers of Spirit-filled, believing Christians have proven this many times over.

Several years ago, a terrible brush fire threatened the grounds of Arrowhead Springs (at the time our international headquarters). Many buildings, including the bungalow where Vonette and I lived, came extremely close to being engulfed in flames. Seven of the buildings were destroyed.

After evacuating the grounds, a group of people who remained to fight the fire prayed earnestly at about two-thirty in the afternoon that God would turn the ninety-mile-per-hour winds away from the buildings. We, too, got on our knees and began to pray that God would turn the winds.

The heat and smoke became so intense that those who were spraying water on the buildings were forced to lie on the ground in order to breathe. At about two-thirty they were at the point of abandoning our bungalow to the flames surrounding it on three sides—when one of the firefighters observed the flag snapping violently in the wind. Suddenly, the flag began to turn and within moments was flapping in the opposite direction. The winds had miraculously shifted and swept the flames in another direction. They all were awestruck at what God had done before their very eyes. Many similar, dramatic answers to prayer could be shared. Yes, prayer truly changes things!

*You pray to become a fruitful witness for Christ.* The divine order is to first talk to God about men and then to talk to men about God. Witnessing is simply gathering the results of prayer, both the prayer of the one who is sharing Christ and the prayers of others. I am convinced that the single most important factor in my becoming a Christian was the prayers of my godly mother.

### **To Whom Do You Pray?**

You pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says:

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

Your prayers are validated by Jesus Christ and are interpreted to God the Father by the Holy Spirit. But since God is one God, manifested in three persons, it is perfectly acceptable to pray to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. There is no jealousy among the three persons of the Trinity. However, the scriptural pattern that Jesus taught addressed the Father.



It is meaningful and encouraging to realize that as you are praying, both the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding. Paul tells us in romans 8:34:

*Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

Earlier in Romans 8, Paul wrote:

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (vv. 26,27).*

## **When Should You Pray?**

There is a sense in which I pray without ceasing, talking to God hundreds of times a day about everything. I begin my day on my knees in prayer, worshipping, praising, and adoring our great and gracious Creator, God, and Father. I acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Lord and Master. By faith, as an act of my will, I appropriate the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I pray for wisdom about the numerous decisions I must make that day. I pray for the salvation of

friends and strangers, the healing of the sick, and the spiritual and material needs of the Campus Crusade for Christ ministry, as well as the needs of various staff members and leaders of other Christian organizations and their ministries. I pray for our leaders and for those in authority over us. I even pray about small personal matters that are of concern to me alone. And God answers!

I then like to spend whatever time is appropriate reading and meditating on God's Word. I often kneel quietly before the open Bible and talk with God. I ask the Holy Spirit, who inspired its writings, to make my reading meaningful and edifying to me.

As I read, I pause to thank God for His loving salvation and provision, to confess any sins in my life that the Scriptures may reveal, to ask Him for the boldness and faith His apostles displayed, and to thank Him for new insights into His divine strategy for reaching the world with the good news of His love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord. I often pause to pray about some special truth or claim a promise.

In the evening I kneel once again to worship my Lord, to read His Word and to ask of Him, "Lord, is there anything in my that is displeasing to You, anything I need to confess?" If the Holy Spirit reveals any sins and weaknesses, I confess them and claim by faith God's victory for my life. Then I can know that since my last conscious thoughts are of Him, my subconscious thoughts will continue to worship Him all night long. Thus when I awaken, my first thoughts will be of our dear Lord.

Group prayer also is vital to the Christian's prayer life, yet few meetings are more dull, unappealing, and boring than the average group prayer meeting. The reason is simple. The majority of Christians involved in the group have not spent time with God in private worship and prayer; consequently, they have nothing to say to Him in public except memorized prayers patterned after older Christians who have learned their way of praying from still others.

How much more exciting it is to teach the group to talk to God as though He were actually present, as indeed He is. This permits spontaneous Spirit-directed prayer in which one area of praise or petition at a time is brought to Him as the Spirit brings subjects to mind. One very rewarding way to pray in small groups is to pray through favorite passages of Scripture verse by verse with each person limited to a thirty second prayer that may last for hours but seem like only minutes.

### **What Should Be Included in Prayer?**

Certain basic elements should be included in prayers. These can be easily remembered by the word "ACTS," an acronym for the following words:

**A**doration  
**C**onfession

## Thanksgiving Supplication

However, ACTS is merely a guideline and not a rigid sequence that you must follow in your prayers.

Let's consider each of these words.

*Adoration.* To adore God is to worship and praise Him, to honor and exalt Him in your heart and mind and with your lips. Prayer is often misunderstood as a vague, mystical element in one's relationship to a holy, awesome God. But the Word of God does not teach this. Rather, it teaches that God, our Father, desires the fellowship of His children.

Your relationship to your heavenly Father should be one of complete trust, faith, and obedience. Likewise, your prayer should express your complete trust in Him and reflect your confidence that He hears you. As a result, you approach Him in adoration and praise, with reverence and awe, with love and gratitude.

Reading aloud psalms of praise and other similar portions of Scripture can greatly enrich your prayer time. A cold, ungrateful heart will soon be warmed, and praising God will come easily.

Personally, I cringe at such references to God as "the Man upstairs," for the God I worship is one whom I also honor and revere. He is the omnipotent, holy God, Creator of all things. Yet, I feel perfectly free to open my heart to Him—to share my deepest heartfelt needs, knowing that He is not only the omnipotent, holy God, but He is also my loving heavenly Father. He loves me more, understands me better, and believes in me more than anyone else in all the world.

The first thing I do when I awaken in the morning is to kneel and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus is in control of my life and thank Him that He loves me and is living His life in and through me in all of His resurrection power and presence. I invite Him to continue His ministry of "seeking and saving the lost" through me, to use me in whatever way is pleasing to Him.

*Confession.* The Christian who needs to be restored to fellowship with Christ should begin with confession (1 John 1:9). Isaiah declares:

*Listen now! The Lord isn't too weak to save you. And he isn't getting deaf? He can hear you when you call! But the trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God. Because of sin he has turned his face away from you and will not listen anymore (Isaiah 59:1,2, TLB).*

If your discipline of prayer begins with worshipful adoration of God, the Holy Spirit will reveal any sin in your life that needs to be confessed. By seeing God in His purity, His holiness, and His love, you become aware of your own sin and unworthiness. As the Holy Spirit makes you aware of sin, you will want to confess it.

Always be totally transparent with God. Don't wear a façade or put on an act. He already knows everything about you, so tell Him exactly how you feel at all times. If you do not feel spiritual, tell Him so. If your heart is cold, admit it. If you have been disobedient, confess it and receive His forgiveness and cleansing, which will restore you to fellowship with Him.

*Thanksgiving.* Nothing pleases God more than your consistent expression of faith. And there's no better way to demonstrate your faith than to say, "Thank You."

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). God's Word commands, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Failure to give thanks is to disobey God.

If you are filled with God's Holy Spirit and recognize that He controls all things, you can thank God not only for the many blessings of each day, but also for the problems and adversities. James says, "Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow" (James 1:2,3 TLB). The apostle Paul records, "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady" (Romans 5:3,4 TLB).

May I suggest that you meditate quietly on all of your blessings, such as your salvation through knowing Christ, assurance of sins forgiven, the opportunity to serve Christ, the chance to go to school, your good health, family and loved ones, a good job, food, and clothing? Thank God daily for each one of them.

Then make a list of each problem, disappointment, heartache, or adversity that concerns you, and thank God in spite of each one of them as you are commanded to do. Giving thanks demonstrates that you really do trust God. Expressing your faith pleases God and invites His blessings, whereas a critical, unbelieving spirit displeases God and hinders His efforts to bless and enrich your life and to use you for His glory.

*Supplication.* For many Christians, prayer is like window shopping—they spend much time looking but never buy anything. Supplication includes petition for your own needs as well as intercession for others. You are to pray for everything and in specific terms. Paul admonishes:

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6,7, TBL).*

As you talk to God, pray that your inner person may be renewed and quickened—be made alert and alive, vital, refreshed, always sensitive to and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Pray about your problems, pray for wisdom and guidance, pray for strength to resist temptation, pray for comfort in time of sorrow—pray for everything. There is nothing too great to bring before the Lord.

Then pray for others. Christians often do not realize the importance of intercession. The apostle Paul continually prayed for his converts (Ephesians 1:15,16). He also asked them to pray for him (Ephesians 6:19). You should pray for other Christians and encourage them to pray for you.

Let me illustrate the importance of this. In 1960, the Mau Mau uprising gripped Kenya in terror. During that time, missionaries Matt and Lora Higgins had to drive through the heart of Mau Mau territory on their way to Nairobi. They were well aware that both Kenyans and missionaries had met violent deaths at the hands of Mau Mau terrorists in that very area.

After dark, about seventeen miles from Nairobi, their Land Rover stalled. Matt tried in vain to repair the vehicle in the darkness. Fearfully, the couple locked themselves in the car and tried to sleep. Together, they prayed Psalm 4:8 aloud, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."

When they awoke, Matt repaired the Rover, and they were soon in Nairobi. The following week, they learned what had happened while they slept. Three terrorists had crept up to their car intending to kill them. But when the Mau Mau saw sixteen men surrounding the Rover, they fled in fear!

Matt and Lora were thrilled—and puzzled. "What sixteen men?" they wondered.

Weeks later, back in America, the rest of the story came to light when a friend asked them, "Have you been in danger lately?"

Matt told him about the Mau Mau, the stalled car, and the sixteen men. The friend nodded excitedly. "On March 23," he said, "God burdened my heart for you. I called the men at our church, and sixteen of us met together for emergency prayer on your behalf!"

No doubt heaven will reveal endless accounts of how God has used intercessory prayer to protect His people and to advance His kingdom.

Always pray daily for your spouse, your children, and your parents. Then pray for your neighbors and friends.

Pray for your pastor, church staff, and lay leaders. Pray for your church members and for missionaries. Pray for various other Christians to whom God has given special responsibility. Pray for presidents and kings and for all those in authority over you.

Pray especially for the salvation of souls, for a daily opportunity to introduce others to Christ and to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our generation. Begin with your campus, workplace, or community. Pray for and seek to find one or more Christian friends with whom you can establish prayer partnerships.

Don't underestimate the power of intercessory prayer for the salvation of souls. My parents were married for thirty-five years before my father received Christ. Their love for each other was strong, but Dad's indifference to the Lord must have caused my mother to experience much heartache and shed many tears. Nevertheless, she kept praying—for him, and for my brothers and sisters and me—until finally our entire family had received the Lord.

I prayed for several years for my fiancée, Vonette Zachary, to receive Christ. When we became engaged, I just knew she was God's choice for me. She had been very active in the church from her youth, and I assumed she was a Christian. As time passed, however, I began to realize that Vonette was a church member but probably not a Christian. There was very little evidence that she had given her life to Christ. So I prayed earnestly for her salvation. Since I had surrendered my life to the Lord before I proposed to Vonette, I dared not marry an unbeliever. Doubts grew and I began to wonder if it was really God's will for me to marry this wonderful and beautiful young woman to whom God was not a reality, even though I loved her dearly.

Then one summer day at a Christian retreat to which I invited her, Vonette surrendered her life to Jesus. My prayers were answered; we were married soon afterward, and we have since spent five God-blessed decades together in a wonderful, Christ-centered marriage.

So I can identify with you if you have been praying for a son, daughter, spouse, or friend and have not yet seen results. I encourage you to trust in God's timing. Although I wanted Vonette to receive Christ right away, God chose to wait three years—a different timetable—one that brought greater glory to Himself. He is sovereign and will answer your prayer in His special way, at His special time.

I encourage you to receive this special word of assurance from God: He desires the soul of your loved one, friend, or neighbor even more than you do.

*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

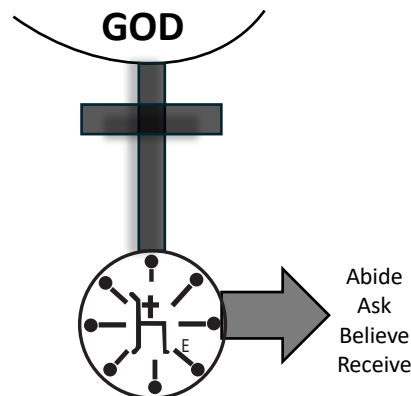
*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness. His is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).*

Just claim the promise of 1 John 5:14,15, “We are sure of this, that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we really know he is listening when we talk to him and make our requests, then we can be sure that he will answer us” (TBL). Then pray for your loved ones and friends with confidence that He will hear you and answer your prayer as He promised.

The ACTS pattern—adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication—has helped many Christians to develop a more well-rounded prayer life in communicating with their loving God and Father.

## How You Can Pray With Confidence

*H*ow can you expect answers to your prayers? There are four imperatives that must be followed: abide, ask, believe, receive. Let’s look briefly at each of these.



### **Abide**

Jesus says that abiding is the key to successful praying. “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, NKJ). In other words, if you are abiding in Christ—if your life is totally yielded to Him and His Word is abiding in you so that you know His will—you can ask anything you want because your will is to do His will.



Abiding, then, is simply living a life of faith and obedience in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, surrendered to the Lordship of Christ with no unconfessed sin, and being totally available to God.

## **Ask**

If you expect answers to your prayers, you must ask, James says: “You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:2,3). Jesus says, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (John 14:14; 16:24).

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7,8).

The unsolved problems in the world are so great that they are almost without number. People are still sick; souls are yet unreached for Christ; evil people still wield ungodly political and financial power; and many injustices continue—largely because the children of God do not ask!

## **Believe**

Jesus promises in Matthew 21:22, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” Believing is at the heart of answered prayer. But how do you get this faith to believe? Should you try to work up some kind of state of mind that will in some way equal faith? Of course not.

God does not require you to have great faith. You simply are to have faith in a great God. Jesus says:

*If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there” and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you (Matthew 17:20).*

James instructs you to “ask in faith without any doubting” for the double-minded person cannot expect God to answer his prayers (James 1:6-8, NASB).

You see, it’s the quality, not the quantity, of the faith that is important.

Faith comes from God (Ephesians 2:8,9). It is not something you try to muster on your own. A life of faith is experience only by those who walk in obedience. You cannot be on the throne of your life and still pray in faith. You will never meet a person who has great faith in a great God who refuses to obey the God in whom he is commanded to place his trust.

The Holy Spirit uses three basic means to produce faith in the one praying.

First, *He uses the Word of God*. As you study the Scriptures, you learn more and more about the character of God—His love, His wisdom, His power, His works, His sovereignty. The more you know of God, the more you trust Him. “Faith,” Paul writes, “comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Second, *He uses fellowship with other Christians and various circumstances and experiences*. For example, your faith in God grows as you observe a friend being used of God to introduce others to Christ. When he shares his experience with you, this encourages you to believe that God can use you, too.

Third, *He uses strong impressions or convictions*. Paul records in Philippians 2:13, “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

For example, five young high school students began to sense their responsibility to God according to Matthew 28:18-20. Each of these students felt impressed to make a list of three friends whom he wanted to claim for Christ. The first week they met daily to pray that these friends would sense their need of God. The second week they prayed for opportunities to speak to their friends about Christ. That week fifteen students received the Savior.

## **Receive**

By faith, claim the answer to your request. If you know you are abiding in Christ, are controlled by the Holy Spirit, and are praying according to the Word and will of God, you can expect God to answer your prayer (1 John 5:14,15). So be prepared to receive the answer. Imagine right now that you are receiving the answer to your request, and begin to thank God for it.

In 1954 Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile. It had never been broken in all the centuries of recorded history, but Bannister believed it could be done. He developed a mental picture of himself breaking the four-minute mile record, and he did it. Since 1954, several hundred other athletes have broken the four-minute mile, simply because Roger Bannister proved that it could be done.

If an individual with only human resources is able to accomplish outstanding success, how much more can you accomplish when you place your faith in the omnipotent God and draw upon His supernatural, inexhaustible resources?

It is a simple fact that whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass—assuming, of course, that there is scriptural authority for it.

Consider, for example, the Great Commission. For many years since that memorable moment when God gave me the vision for this ministry, I have been strongly impressed that

the Holy Spirit wants the Great Commission fulfilled in our generation. Since that original deep impression in 1951, the Great Commission has been my number one priority as an expression of my love for our Lord and my desire to obey Him.

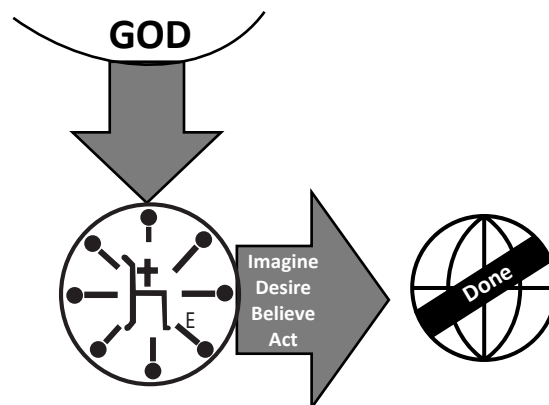
I have a vivid mental picture of what fulfilling the Great Commission will involve—saturating a world of six billion people; discipling tens of millions; training key leader representatives in each of the hundreds of nations and protectorates of the world; and using every modern means of technology—radio, television, high-speed presses audio-visuals in all forms, satellites, and jet travel—to communicate God’s love worldwide.

Our strategy for accomplishing this goal is called *NewLife2000*. Christians from more than 170 nations around the world are a part of this comprehensive plan for world evangelism. Millions of believers within thousands of churches, denominations, organizations, and mission agencies are uniting to make *NewLife2000* a priority for their evangelism and discipleship ministries at home and abroad.

I see clearly with my mind’s eye a day in the immediate future when billions of people on earth will become aware of the great truths concerning God’s love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ and will crown Him Lord of lords. I know that the fulfillment of the Great Commission is the will of God because it is His command and the desire of His heart, and I ardently long to have it come to pass.

Furthermore, I sincerely believe that the Great Commission will be fulfilled because it is God’s idea, not man’s. It is inconceivable to me that our Lord would have given us the command without giving us the needed resources with which to fulfill His command.

And finally, because I so vividly imagine, ardently desire, and sincerely believe in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in my generation, I can enthusiastically act upon it by giving myself completely to the task and helping to mobilize millions of others toward its fulfillment.



In your own life—in your own home, community, state, nation, and the world where you personally are concerned—determine, on a clearly scriptural basis, what God would

have you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon to help fulfill the Great Commission.

## **Tapping the Source of Power**

It may be that, in addition to your own personal ministry, God would have you pray for the personnel of a radio or television station or the staff of a newspaper to be an influence for righteousness. It may be that He would have you claim for Him a high school or college campus or your workplace; or that every person within a one-mile radius of your home, or every home in the entire city would be personally visited by trained persons who would lovingly, prayerfully, and intelligently present the claims of Christ.

Remember that, as you bow in prayer, you are tapping a source of power that can change the course of history. God's mighty power, His love, His wisdom, and His grace are available to you if you will but believe Him and claim them. Remember always, Jesus promised that you would do the same miracles He did, and even greater ones (John 14:12).

Will you join with us in praying for the Lord of the harvest to send forth millions of disciples to work with thousands of local churches of all denominations and with various Christian movements and organizations who desire to see the Great Commission fulfilled in this generation?

Will you pray also for a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit upon the entire world and for the funds and materials needed to fulfill this God-given task?

Prayer is the greatest privilege of the Christian life and the most evolutionary source of power known to man. If you were to take seriously the promises of God and begin to claim by faith in prayer all that you have been promised, you would experience miracles in your life and ministry, multitudes would be introduced to our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole course of history would be changed, and you would help to fulfill the Great Commission during your lifetime.

# Study Guide

## Self-Study Guide

1. What is prayer? Why is prayer important? (See page 10.)
2. Whose prayers does God hear?
  - a. Psalm 66:18
  - b. Proverbs 15:29
  - c. Mark 11:25
  - d. John 9:31
3. Why would unconfessed sin hinder or halt your prayer life?
4. What do these verses teach about how to pray?
  - a. Psalm 145:18
  - b. Matthew 6:5-7
  - c. Matthew 21:22
  - d. Philippians 4:6
5. What vital elements of prayer are found in Acts 4:24-30?
6. What vital elements of prayer did Christ include in His prayer in John 17?
7. What part does prayer have in witnessing? (See page 17.)
8. How would you explain the elements of the model prayer Christ gave His disciples in Matthew 6:9-13?
9. When should you pray? Is one time “better” than any other? (See page 18.)
10. What are some of the promises Christ makes to you about prayer?
  - a. Matthew 6:6
  - b. Matthew 18:20
  - c. Luke 11:9-13
  - d. John 14:13,14
11. What are the four parts of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1? Explain briefly what each one means.
12. What important prerequisites to effective prayer do you find in these verses?
  - a. John 15:7
  - b. James 4:2,3
  - c. John 14:14
  - d. Matthew 21:22
  - e. James 1:6
13. What part does the Holy Spirit play in prayer? (See Romans 8:26,27.)
14. What does it mean to be prepared to receive God’s answers to your prayers?
15. What promise does James 5:16 give us?
16. A prayer journal is an effective way to record God’s faithfulness in answering your prayers. Start a journal this week by recording your daily requests. Then enter God’s answers as they come.

## **Group Discussion Questions**

1. The Scriptures command us to “pray continually” (see 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Discuss with your group how you can make this a habit in your daily life.
2. Share some of your creative ideas for quiet times and personal prayer times.
3. Prayer changes things—and people. By way of encouragement, share with your group an answer to prayer which you have experienced that has changed a situation or person.
4. What are some specific prayer requests that you want to believe God will answer? Share these with your group and identify some promises from Scripture that you can claim for each request.
5. What part does prayer play in witnessing? Share an example of how prayer made you more effective as you shared your faith during a particular situation.
6. Review the importance of prayer in the founding of Campus Crusade (see page 9). With your group, devise a prayer strategy to help fulfill the Great Commission in your community.