

Explorers in Prayer – Lesson Three Handout

The Place of Repentance and Godliness in Prayer

Some Bible passages that show the link between our godliness and the effectiveness of our prayer life: Psalm 84: 11; Hebrews 5: 7; James 5: 16 -18; Psalm 66: 18-19; 1 John 3:21-22; Proverbs 15: 29; 1 Peter 3: 12 and John 15: 7.

“This key text, John 15: 7, makes it plain that the promise is unlimited, but its fulfilment depends on [us remaining in Christ]...The scriptural key to [this] abiding is in 1 John 2 vs 6 ‘Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.’ In other words, it meant being willing for the Holy Spirit to live through [us] the life the Saviour would have lived, if He had been in [our] place.” Norman Grubb, *Rees Howells: Intercessor*

“Our power in prayer depends upon our life. Where our life is right we shall know how to pray so as to please God, and prayer will secure the answer...All lack of power to pray aright and perseveringly, all lack of power in prayer with God, points to some lack in the Christian life. It is as we learn to live the life that pleases God, that God will give what we ask.” Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession*,

“The apostle John summed up the relation between prayer and behaviour: ‘[We] receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.’ Martin Lloyd-Jones answered the question of why people like George Muller and Martin Luther received such spectacular answers to their prayers by saying, ‘We desire to receive all the blessings which saints have received; but we forget that they were saints. We ask, why does God not answer my prayer as He answered that man’s prayer? We should ask, why is it that I have not lived the type of life which that man has lived?’” Philip Yancey, *Prayer – Does it make any difference?*

Godliness is not about our external actions. Jesus said, “*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.*” (Matthew 23:27). He went on to explain, “What comes out of you is what defiles you. For from within, out of your hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile you.” (Mark 7: 20-23)

Humility is a trait of godliness. In Richard Fosters book, page 63, he says “*humility means to live as close to the truth as possible.*” So repentance is about humility - it is the way in which we recognise and acknowledge the truth about ourselves.

Individual Exercise: Take a look at one of the following each day and ask God to help us as we examine our hearts so that we might know and confess the truth about ourselves concerning these things.

Day 1 - How much do we desire to know and love God?

Day 2 - Do we have a heart of compassion for the poor and needy?

Day 3 - Are we willing to be obedient to God?

Day 4 - Are we willing to be humble?

Day 5 - How easy/hard do we find it to forgive others? *

Day 6 - Do we have a child like faith in God?

Day 7 - How much are we driven by our own desires?

* Note: The Lord's Prayer reminds us of the strong link between God forgiving us and us forgiving others - so be particularly aware of our need to confess any unforgiveness.

Read chapters 2 & 3 of the course book.

Prayer Triplet Exercise: The prayer time for this session may not last a half hour. The meeting should open with a time of prayer; inviting God's presence and gentle working in our hearts and minds as we discuss the following. If you feel able to, talk about your childhood and the things that might link up your childhood with the person you are now. Also, we had a definition of humility from Richard Foster's book as living "as close to the truth as possible". Discuss what you think living close to the truth means for you. End the session praying for strength to live close to the truth, and healing for those times when sin has triumphed over us.

George Mueller – Man of God

Charles Inglis, the well-known evangelist, relates the following remarkable incident: "When I first came to America thirty-one years ago, I crossed the Atlantic with the captain of a steamer who was one of the most devoted men I ever knew; and when we were off the banks of Newfoundland he said to me: 'Mr. Inglis, the last time I crossed here, five weeks ago, one of the most extraordinary things happened that has completely revolutionized the whole of my Christian life. Up to that time I was one of your ordinary Christians. We had a man of God on board, George Mueller, of Bristol. I had been on that bridge for twenty-two hours and never left it. I was startled by someone tapping me on the shoulder. It was George Mueller.

'Captain,' said he, 'I have come to tell you that I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon.' This was Wednesday.

'It is impossible,' I said.

'Very well, if your ship can't take me God will find some other means of locomotion to take me. I have never broken an engagement in fifty-seven years.'

'I would willingly help you, but how can I? I am helpless.'

'Let us go down to the chart room and pray,' he said.

I looked at this man and I thought to myself, 'What lunatic asylum could the man have come from? I never heard of such a thing.'

'Mr. Mueller,' I said, 'do you know how dense this fog is?'

'No,' he replied, 'my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life.'

He went down on his knees, and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. I thought to myself, 'That would suit a children's class, where the children were not more than eight or nine years of age.' The burden of his prayer was something like this: 'O Lord, if it is consistent with Thy will, please remove this fog in five minutes. You know the engagement You made for me in Quebec for Saturday. I believe it is Your will.' When he had finished, I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to pray.

'First,' he said, 'you do not believe God will do it; and, second, I believe He has done it. And there is no need whatever for you to pray about it.'

I looked at him, and George Mueller said this: 'Captain, I have known my Lord for fifty-seven years and there has never been a single day that I have failed to gain an audience with the King. Get up, Captain and open the door, and you will find the fog is gone.' I got up, and the fog was gone. On Saturday afternoon George Mueller was in Quebec."