

Ascension and Pentecost

prayer and the Holy Spirit

AIM

A biblical reflection and prayer on the Holy Spirit as the agent of prayer, for use by individuals or small groups.

INTRODUCTION

I am sure that many of us sometimes struggle to know how and what to pray and maybe this leaves us feeling that we are not very good at prayer and so we don't bother as much as we ought to. Maybe we feel that prayer is something that is only for the super spiritual people in church or for the leaders etc. I want to share with you that it is possible for every believer to have a powerful and effective prayer life and the key to this is having an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit and allowing him to lead and direct our times of prayer.

BIBLE READING

Read: James 5 v 17-18 "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for 3 and a half years".

REFLECTION

That was some powerful prayer life that Elijah had, that even the weather obeyed him. Yet the bible makes it clear that he was a man just like us, in other words, he was not divine; he was simply a man called by God with a powerful anointing on his life. I believe that God wants all of us to be mighty and powerful in prayer. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was just poured out on a few chosen men and women for specific tasks, but now through the cross, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all believers and inside each one of us is the potential for a powerful prayer life.

Prayer should not just be about a one way conversation, but it is supposed to be a dialogue where we are not just bringing our requests but we are also listening to what the Lord is wanting to communicate with us as well. Prayer should also be a time of worship and of thanksgiving not only for previous answered prayer, but we should also be offering thanksgiving as an act of faith, believing that we are already receiving what we are praying for now - Mathew 21 v 21 "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer"

When Jesus was speaking to his disciples before going to the cross, he was sharing with them that he was soon going to depart to be with the Father but he promised that he would not leave them alone, he would send someone to be with them who would be just like him - the Holy Spirit (John 16 v 7). The bible refers to the Holy Spirit as a person - the third person of the Godhead who is sent from the Father to help us in our Christian lives. He is the one who will lead and guide us and comfort us and he is the one who will also teach us how to pray.

In Romans 8 v 26 it says "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words can not express". The Holy Spirit will help us to know what to pray and then he will intercede through us. This can be in two different ways; either he will release us to pray in our heavenly language of tongues which is a spiritual gift given to the body of Christ as listed in 1 Corinthians 12 v 10 or he will drop ideas into our minds in our own natural language and we will know how to pray. This is an amazing gift as it bypasses our natural understanding which can sometimes hinder our prayer because we are often tempted to pray our own will or our own opinion or desires into a situation. When we pray with the help of the Holy Spirit, he will always lead us to pray the will of God about our lives and the situations that we are being led to pray for. Not only that, but we know that once we begin to pray with the help of the Holy Spirit then we are now praying the will

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of God and not our own opinions, and so we can be assured that we will get positive answers to our prayers.

1 John 5 v14-15 "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we have asked of him".

WOW! When we pray in the will of God, then God will hear us and will answer us with what we have prayed for. How many times have we been frustrated because we have prayed and prayed and not apparently seen the answer that we are looking for? Although I do acknowledge that there are often seasons for God answering and that sometimes we may have to keep knocking on heavens door about some situations for a long time before receiving the answer that we desire, I do also believe that sometimes we don't receive because we are not praying the will of God.

James 4 v 3 "When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives".

So sometimes we can be praying for our own desires that are not God's desires and that can be one reason why our prayers are not answered in the way that we want.

Jeremiah 33 v 3 "Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and un-searchable things that you do not yet know". When we pray, God not only wants us to be talking but he wants to be revealing things to us as well.

Psalms 100 v 4 "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise". A big part of prayer that we often neglect is that prayer is not just about us bringing a shopping list but it is about a living relationship with God. How would we like it if the people who we loved in our life, only wanted to speak to us when they wanted something? and yet how often do we treat God like that. The way into the presence of God is through entering with praise and thanksgiving and just enjoying his presence.

Recently I have been reading through the story of Esther in the Bible and have been encouraged again by how Esther received a great victory for the Jewish people simply because she had favour from the King before she even went to ask for anything. Before she was taken to see the King even before she was made Queen, she asked the Kings advisor as to what the King liked. We need to find out what pleases the Lord and begin to build an intimate relationship with him through our daily communion with him in our quiet times. Some times of prayer may not even involve speaking but may simply be just sitting in his presence. Again if we have a close relationship with someone, it is often possible to sit in the same room with them and not have to utter a single word and yet you know that their presence is there with you and have a contentment without words. When we come to that place of intimacy, then just like Esther we will begin to know the favour of the Lord.

Therefore I want to encourage you that the key to finding an effective prayer life is to begin to communicate with the Holy Spirit, to ask him how to pray, to ask him to help you and to pray through you. If you have never received the gift of tongues, then begin to ask that the Lord will baptise you in his Holy Spirit and release this gift to you. It is freely available for all believers - Luke 11 v 13 "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him". God longs to pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. We need to also begin to praise and worship God on a regular basis and not just come to him with our needs but also begin to share our joys with him as well - to build relationship. We need to begin to thank God for the blessings in our lives and to thank him for the answers by faith that we have not yet received. And then, we need to begin to allow God to speak to us as well and to not be afraid of the silence of sitting in his presence. In his presence, there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16 v 11). The world looks for peace and joy in many different places, but we can find both peace and joy by being in the presence of our wonderful Saviour. Out of that place of intimacy will come the answers that we are looking for and we will be

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inspired to pray more and to further seek his will for our lives and the lives of those around us.

Prayer

Today I encourage you to pray:

Holy Spirit I want to know you. Holy Spirit I welcome you into my prayer life and I ask you to help me to pray

Then: Wait - allow the peace of God to come and fill your life and wait for the unction of the Spirit of what and how to pray. Always follow his leading and never feel that you have to bring your pre-written list. If he chooses to say; just sit with me, then decide that you will do this. If he leads you into a time of worship, then worship. At other times, he may place a certain burden on your heart that is on his heart at this time. It may be a person or it may be a city or a nation - it may be something that you had already had on your heart or it may even be a situation that you know nothing about; but just follow his lead. Remember when you pray in the will of God, you are effecting the Kingdom of God and allowing his Kingdom to be established here on earth. You will begin to be encouraged as you see things changing as a result of your times of prayer; which will then encourage you to want to pray more. You will also find that your times of intimacy with the Holy Spirit are creating in you a hunger to spend more time in his presence.

Today, say Holy Spirit - what is on your heart - what do you want to intercede for now.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more seasonal material please revisit the website.

Acknowledgements

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HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways. You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk