

Introduction:

We have been discussing prayer for a whole month now. I hope you have been helped as much as I have. The basis for our whole study has been that we are powerless. We cannot win the fight in which we are engaged. We cannot overcome the enemy. We cannot accomplish the goals. However, God can. God is the power of the universe who can accomplish all. If we want to win, we have to plug in to His power, allowing His power to course through our lives. We have discovered that prayer is the connector that sets us up as a conduit for God's power to work in this world. Prayer is the invitation for God to work in and through our lives. Having driven that home repeatedly, we must now recognize that prayer is only half of the plugging in equation. It is an extremely important half and an often overlooked half, which is why we have devoted so much time just to this half. Nevertheless, it is still only half. The other half of the plugging in equation is Bible study. Actually, it is not exactly accurate to describe prayer as half and Bible study as half, as though God's power will work in our lives halfway if we pray or halfway if we study. These two activities are actually dependent on each other. The truth is without Bible study, prayer is useless and without prayer, Bible study is useless. However, when we combine prayer with Bible study and Bible study with prayer, the dynamic power of God will explode in our lives and through our work. Again, we recall one of our key verses: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us..." (**Ephesians 3:20**). Examine with me five reasons prayer and Bible study are the dynamic duo.

Discussion:

- I. Prayer and Bible study: The Whole Armor of God
 - A. The foundation we laid for this series of lessons was remembering that we are in a battle that we cannot win by ourselves (**Ephesians 6:10-13**). From that we recognized that we must put on the whole armor of God. In our very first lesson in this series, we discussed fully prayer's place as part of our armor (**Ephesians 6:18**). Without prayer, we enter the battlefield with deadly gaps in our armor.
 - B. However, we must recognize that prayer is not the entirety of our armor. Interestingly, in the modern religious world there is actually a strong emphasis on prayer. More and more religious people around us are focusing on prayer. Yet, we must recognize that if we ride the pendulum of extremism to so focus on prayer that we neglect God's word, we will enter the battlefield with just as many gaps in our armor as if we neglect prayer.
 - C. Examine the armor described in **Ephesians 6:14-17**. We know the Word of God is described as our sword. We may be tempted to believe that is the extent of the role for God's word in our battle. However, in reality, every piece of the armor is tied to the Word. Our loins are to be girt up with the truth that comes from God's Word (**John 17:17**). We must put on the breastplate of righteousness. The Word trains us in righteousness (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Where is this Gospel of peace but in the word of God (**Colossians 1:5**)? Then we take up the shield of faith. Don't we already know that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (**Romans 10:17**)? Finally, we put on the helmet of salvation, which we gain from obedience to the Word (**Acts 20:32; II Timothy 3:15**).
 - D. The fact is, if we want to be fully armed and ready for battle we must intermingle Bible study and prayer. If we neglect either side, we are destined for failure, defeat and death. Put them together, however, and God's power will explode through us in the battle and we will stand victoriously with Him in the end.
- II. Prayer and Bible Study: Praying in Faith.
 - A. Anyone who has done any study on prayer has learned that faith is fundamental to effective, fervent prayer. **Matthew 21:22** says, "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will

receive.” That is a pretty blank check statement, which Jesus made without all the caveats we sometimes try to read into the text. **James 1:5-8; 5:15-19** also demonstrate the absolute necessity of faith for prayer to accomplish anything.

- B. Regrettably, however, when most of us discuss faith and prayer, we almost treat faith in a vacuum. We forget what faith is and from where faith comes. Too often, all we say about faith and prayer is that we must pray believing that God can do what we ask and believing that God will do what we ask. However, I know I have hit a major roadblock with that. How can I pray that God will do what I have asked, when I know full well that He may not do it and I have prepared myself to submit to His will when it is different from mine? I remember what faith really is, that is how. **Romans 10:17** says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith does not believe that God will do anything I ask. Faith believes in God and believes God based on His revelation.
- C. The prayer offered in faith is not just some blind conviction that God will do whatever I ask because I am convinced He must grant my request. The prayer offered in faith is one that is founded in and grounded upon what God has said in His word. Consider James’ great example of Elijah in **James 5:17-18**. Elijah’s was a prayer of faith, not because he decided that it should stop raining and was just really, really, really convinced that if he asked for the rain to stop that it would. Elijah’s was a prayer of faith because it was predicated upon His faith in God and His word. In **Deuteronomy 11:17**, God had promised that if Israel went into idolatry, He would stop the rain. Elijah had faith in God’s promise and simply asked for God to do what He promised. That is praying in faith.
- D. I cannot pray in faith... I cannot pray, believing, unless I have studied God’s word and know what He has promised. I can however, pray in faith, believing that God can do anything, will do what He has promised and will do good for His servants when my prayer is based on His word.

III. Prayer and Bible Study: Knowing God.

- A. Think for a moment about communication in general. Think about the conversations you have with people you know well, close friends, family members, etc. Now think about the conversations you have with strangers; check-out clerks, bank-tellers and people on elevators. Is there a difference in those conversations? Of course there are. The better you know people the deeper and more meaningful your conversations. The better we know each other the more effective our communication is with each other.
- B. Let’s face it. God knows us. He created us. **Psalms 139:1-6, 13-16** demonstrates how intimately God knows us. The question is do we know God. The fact is the only way we will get to know God is through His word. **I Corinthians 2:7-11** demonstrates that we cannot know God, knowing what He thinks or what He desires except He reveal it to us. The passage goes on to say that is exactly what He has done through the Holy Spirit. How did the Holy Spirit reveal God’s mind to us? **II Peter 1:20-21** shows that scripture is the revelation of God’s mind to man.
- C. Consider **Mark 12:24**. The Sadducees did not know God and they did not know His power, because they did not know His word. If we want to know God, we must get into His word. If we want our ability to communicate with God to deepen beyond vague generalities and courteous pleasantries, we have to get into His word. Our ability to pray will deepen in direct proportion to our knowledge of God through His word.

IV. Prayer and Bible Study: Praying in Jesus’ Name.

- A. Another amazing statement regarding prayer is found in **John 14:13-14**. For a long time, this verse scared me. I thought it offered more than I was willing to concede. I was afraid the “health and wealth” teachers might use this verse to propagate the idea that real prayer grants me anything I ask for. I “dealt with” this verse and those teachers by claiming, “This was said to the apostles.” However, that approach really does not fix the problem I had. I have never believed that Jesus gave a completely blank check to His apostles either saying, “Anything under the sun you might ever ask for I will give you.” Notice what He actually said, “Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

- B. Two keys about Jesus' statement on prayer. The request must be made in His name and it must be about accomplishing the Father's glory. Frankly, understanding that, I no longer believe this was a statement about the apostle's prayers but about any person's prayers. But what does it mean to offer a prayer in Jesus' name. It does not mean to simply end with the phrase, "In Jesus' name." **Acts 4:7, 9-10** demonstrates that doing something in the name of Jesus, means doing it according to His power or according to what He has authorized. How do we know what Jesus has authorized or empowered us to do and to pray? We know from His revelation to us. **II Timothy 3:16-17** tells us that scripture equips us, authorizes us for every good work. That means it authorizes us and empowers us for every good prayer. We cannot pray in Jesus' name unless our prayers coincide with Jesus equipping and empowering word.
- C. Further, **John 15:5-8** corresponds with and is in the same context as **John 14:13-14**. Specifically note **vss. 7-8**, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." Here is the heart of the matter. We have said it in this series before, but we must drive it home again. Too often, we want prayer to accomplish what we want. Therefore, we use prayer to try to bend God to do our will. But prayer is the means by which we are bent to God's will. We will only get what we want in prayer when our lives have been transformed by God's word causing Jesus to abide in us. Because then we will desire what Jesus desires and what we desire will glorify God. At that point, we will get anything and everything we ask for in prayer, because we will only be asking for what God wants and what glorifies Him. This is mature and effective prayer.
- V. Prayer and Bible Study: Two-Way Communication.
- A. Typically, communication is a two way process. It includes give and take from both sides. Prayer is how we talk to God and we certainly want God to listen. But if we want God to listen to us, we must be willing to listen to Him when He talks back. Have you ever had a conversation with somebody who will not let you get a word in edgewise? They may even ask you a question but then will not let you finish the answer. What do you think of those conversations? I doubt God likes that kind of communication from us either.
- B. Examine **Isaiah 66:1-5**. Pay careful attention to God's point to Israel. There were many Israelites offering up worship to God. They were entreating God for forgiveness by offering sacrifices of bulls and lambs. God said, however, that they might as well have been offering human and pig sacrifices (neither of which God would accept). Why? Because they were coming to the house of the Lord to "worship," but were leaving to do whatever they wanted. They wanted God to listen to them, but they refused to listen to God.
- C. However, God clearly states to whom He will listen. God listens to those who humbly hear His word and tremble at His word, obeying it. Think about it. This is exactly what **I Peter 1:22-2:5** teaches. We were saved by obeying God's word. If we want to continue in a relationship with Him, we must put off our own wickedness and desire God's word. When we desire that word as our food and nourishment, then we can offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise.
- D. We have to come to grips with this. If we will not listen to God through His word, He will not listen to us through our prayers. Bible study and prayer must go together.

Conclusion:

Regrettably, it seems like religious people ride on extremes. There are some who act as though the only thing that really matters is that we study God's word and obey it. There are others who act as though all that really matters is whether or not we submit to God in really heartfelt prayer. The truth is these two together are the dynamic duo. Only when we have both will we become the conduit for God's power to work in this world.