

Introduction:

Would you like to know the one verse that will revolutionize your prayer life? It is probably the most important verse to produce proper prayer. If you follow this one verse, I guarantee your prayers will improve in nature, consistency and effectiveness. **Galatians 2:20** says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Do you see why this passage is the key to plugging in with an electrifying prayer life? Who could deny that Jesus' prayer life is a stellar example of prayer in spirit and truth? If we crucify ourselves with Christ, allowing Him to live through us, His prayer life will become ours. When Jesus is on the throne of our hearts, true prayer will be the natural result. In fact, in many ways our prayer lives demonstrate whether or not Jesus is truly our king. Therefore we ask, "If Jesus were running our lives, what would our prayer lives look like?"

In prayer, we are God's warriors connecting to Him to fight the battle against the enemy (**Ephesians 6:12-13**). When in war, or business and sports for that matter, if you were to concentrate all your force in a particular location to overcome the opposition, you would call it a "Power Play." When we pray properly, that is exactly what we are doing. We are focusing the strength of God in a particular place to overcome the opposition. Therefore, as a reminder of Jesus' prayer life, I have developed the following acrostic from the new phrase "**POWER PRAY.**"

Jesus **P**rayed,

Offering Himself as part of the answer to His prayers;

praying **W**ith others and alone;

praying **E**xtended prayers and brief prayers;

praying **R**egarding personal decisions;

praying **P**ersistently;

Relying on the Father;

Asking on behalf of others;

Yearning for the Father's glory above all else.

Discussion:

- I. *Jesus Prayed.* Once again, we have to state the obvious. Jesus' effective prayer life began with praying. He was not just a believer in prayer, an expert on prayer or a teacher of prayer. He was a prayer. This is all the more impressive considering who Jesus was and is. In **John 14:6-11** and **17:25**, Jesus explained that He knew and was connected to the Father in a way that we are not and cannot be on this side of eternity. However, despite that connection, Jesus prayed (**Hebrews 5:7**). If Jesus, God the Son, needed prayer while on earth, how much more must we pray? If we want to POWER PRAY, we must first pray.
- II. *Offering Himself as part of the answer to His prayers.* In **John 17:11-12**, Jesus prayed that the Father guard the disciples once Jesus was no longer in the world. However, note Jesus' promise to the disciples in **Matthew 28:20**: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus prayed, but then expected to be used in the answer to His prayer. Another example is one of His most awesome prayers, uttered while hanging on the cross in **Luke 23:34**. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." What was Jesus doing while praying this prayer? He was offering the only sacrifice by which His prayer could ever be granted. Jesus prayed, but was willing to be part of His prayer's answer. Remember **Ephesians 3:20**. God can do exceedingly, abundantly above all we ask. However, He will do it through the power working in us. Therefore, we must not pray and then sit back and wait. If we want to POWER PRAY, we must work and pray, offering ourselves as part of the answer to our prayers.

- III. *Praying With others and alone.* In **Luke 9:28**, Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him to pray. In **Luke 9:18**, He had been off praying alone. We must recognize these two different forums of prayer. The same Jesus who talked about locking ourselves in a closet to pray (**Matthew 6:6**), prayed with others. We, too, must learn to pray by ourselves without trotting our prayer experiences out to gain approval from men. But having grasped that habit, we must also learn to join our prayer forces with other Christians, certainly in the assembly, but also outside of it. When was the last time you prayed by yourself? When was the last time you prayed with other Christians? When was the last time you prayed with other Christians outside of an assembly? If we want to POWER PRAY, we must learn to pray with others and alone.
- IV. *Praying Extended prayers and brief prayers.* As I teach on prayer, I am often caught in a paradox. At times, I try to convince us that we do not have to pray for lengthy periods of time, we just have to pray. However, in the same sermon I will ask how much time we invest in prayer, knowing full well that time invested in prayer is an indicator of devotion. Perhaps you have picked up on these seemingly contradictory approaches to prayer. Looking at Jesus' prayer life has helped me fill out this picture. Jesus did both. In **Luke 6:12**, Jesus prayed all night. We must learn to apply ourselves to prayer for long periods of time. In **Matthew 26:36-40**, Jesus rebuked Peter, James and John because they could not pray with watchfulness for even one hour. However, prayers can also be short and powerful. There are times when bursts of prayer are appropriate. On the cross, Jesus uttered three one sentence prayers. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" (**Matthew 27:46**). "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (**Luke 23:34**). "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (**Luke 23:46**). Are there any issues for which we see the need for watchful, vigilant prayer? If we saw the need, could we do it? Are there moments when a burst of prayer is needed? Have we developed our spiritual senses to recognize those moments and pray? If we want to POWER PRAY, we must learn to pray extended and brief prayers.
- V. *Praying Regarding personal decisions.* Jesus' all night prayer (**Luke 6:12-14**) was the night before He selected His circle of intense trainees. Moments ago we asked if there were any issues we thought important enough to apply ourselves to extended, watchful prayer. Jesus clearly thought some decisions were that important. So should we. We should pray for wisdom and guidance (**James 1:5-8**). However, make sure you are praying with faith that God will grant your request. Remember **Psalms 119:105**. God's word guides us. Regrettably, too many people pray about choices but neglect to look into the Bible to find God's guidance. Finally, remember that God works all things together for good to those who love Him (**Romans 8:28**). If you have based your decision on guidance from God's word, you can truly pray that God work it together for good. Let me add that too many act as though our decisions are a standardized test in which only one choice can work. That is not necessarily the case. Sometimes multiple choices fit equally well within the realm of God's word. We are free to pick the one we want and then we can ask God to work it out for good to His glory. At other times, we may realize we made a choice that was not governed by God's word. At those times, we need to ask God's forgiveness, work to reconcile the issue in any way we can and still request that He use it to glorify Him in whatever way He can. If we want to POWER PRAY, prayer must become a part of our decision making process.
- VI. *Praying Persistently.* In **Mark 1:35**, Jesus arose before daybreak to go to a solitary place to pray. In **Matthew 14:23**, Jesus sent the multitudes away and prayed through the evening. If we read through the gospels, we see these were not one time occurrences. They were examples of Jesus' consistent and persistent prayer habit. Further, not only did Jesus pray persistently. He was persistent with some particular prayers. In the garden, He prayed the same prayer three times (**Matthew 26:39, 42, 44**). By the way, this kind of repeated praying is called importuning God and is illustrated by Jesus' parable in **Luke 11:5-8**. I know we feel uncomfortable with praying the same thing repeatedly. However, when some issue is important enough to us, we will learn to repeat and persist in a particular prayer until God says, "Yes," or we are absolutely certain He has said, "No." We must not allow prayer to become a once in a while foray into communication with God. We must purposefully pray. If we have to get up early and go to a solitary place, so be it. If we have to send everyone away from us and pray into the night, so be it. Further, we must intensely believe that God

listens to our prayers and that our prayers can and do impact God, and therefore intensely and persistently offer some particular prayers. Whatever the case, if we want to POWER PRAY, we must persist in prayer.

VII. *Relying on the Father.* I do not believe we can fully comprehend what took place spiritually on the cross. Just as our sins separate us from the Father (**Isaiah 59:1-2**), our sins separated Jesus from the Father. That is part of why Jesus prayed “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” in **Matthew 27:46**. I cannot imagine what that must have been like for Jesus, who had a connection with the Father that none of us have ever experienced. However, even in that time of abandonment, Jesus also prayed, “Into Your hands I commit My Spirit” (**Luke 23:46; Psalm 31:5**). The psalm from which He quoted is an amazing example of trusting the Lord, even in hard times. Read **Psalm 31:9-16**. Notice specifically the phrase, “My times are in your hand.” As we pray, we must pray trusting that God will do what is right, He will do what is best and He will do it in His time, not ours. If we want to POWER PRAY, we must rely on the Father.

VIII. *Asking on behalf of others.* One of the most powerful aspects of Jesus’ prayer life is His focus on others. **John 17:9, 20** and **Luke 22:31-32** are excellent examples of Jesus’ intercession on behalf of others. Further, Jesus’ intercession for us has not ended. **Romans 8:34** and **Hebrews 7:25** both demonstrate that Jesus, while at the right hand of God, never ceases to make intercession for us. How powerful is that? The most amazing example of Jesus’ intercession, and the most challenging, is found in **Luke 23:34**, uttered while Jesus hung on the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Jesus taught us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us (**Matthew 5:44**). While on the cross, Jesus modeled this, interceding on behalf of the people who shouted out, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him!” We must learn to intercede and pray for others, even our enemies. If we want to POWER PRAY, we must learn to ask on behalf of others.

IX. *Yearning for the Father’s glory above all else.* Read through **John 17**. Notice how the Father’s glory is the root of every aspect of this prayer. Notice what Jesus prayed: “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You” (**vs. 1**). “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given me to do” (**vs. 4**). “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world” (**vs. 6**). “I have given to them the words which You have given Me” (**vs. 8**). “I have given them Your word” (**vs. 14**). “And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it...” (**vs. 26**). Every personal request, every intercession was ultimately rooted in glorifying the Father. This is the heart of effective, fervent prayer. Jesus’ prayers were rarely, “Father, here is what I want.” They were always, “Here is what I want, because I know it is what You want and what will glorify You.” The rare exception to that can be seen in **Matthew 26:39**. In that case, Jesus did say, “Father, here is what I want.” However, notice that when Jesus offered that kind of prayer, His mindset was “nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” It is as if Jesus were saying, “Father, here is what I really want. However, what I want more than that is Your will and Your glory. If my desire can fit in with Your plans, please, grant it to Me. If not, I want Your will more than I want Mine.” We must pray in this manner. If we want to POWER PRAY, we must yearn for the Father’s glory above all else.

Conclusion:

I have never been big on religious fads. I have never put a fish on my car, honked because I loved Jesus or passed on an e-mail that would save every person that read it. But there was one fad I did like. There was one fad I wish would not just be a fad but would be an actual guide to each and every Christian’s life. Do you remember the W.W.J.D (What Would Jesus Do?) fad? **Galatians 2:20** provides a basis for that question. What would Jesus do? I can tell you one thing He did do. Jesus prayed. Not only did He pray, He POWER PRAYed. Jesus plugged in to the Father. Crucify yourself with Him and let Him live through you. Then you will plug in as well and you will POWER PRAY.