

# ABCs of Highly Effective Prayer

by Jim and Jeri Combs

In the tradition of acrostic or alphabetical psalms and chapters in the Bible (see Psalm 119), it is appropriate to arrange these great truths on prayer in English alphabetical order. In fact, in one month's time you could memorize the sequence by reading this article daily before you begin your prayer time.

"Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

I come into your presence, Lord...

## **A**sking in Jesus name personally

***"Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name: ask and you shall receive that your joy may be full," Jesus said in the upper room (John 16:24).***

As you begin your prayers, approach His throne with the wondrous name of Jesus in your heart and on your lips.

## **B**elieving your promises specifically

***"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not," (Jeremiah 33:3).***

***"All the promises of God in Him are yea and Amen, unto the glory of God by us," (2 Corinthians 1:20).***

When Abraham was told that at the age of 100 (his wife Sarah was 90) he would have a son whose descendents would multiply to a vast number, he first laughed, but then he became "fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21). We believers are the spiritual "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:28,29). According to E.R. Storms there are actually 8,810 promises in the Bible.

## **C**onfessing my sins honestly

***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).***

Be honest and frank in your confessions, hiding nothing, defending nothing before Him with whom we have to do. Confess your actual transgressions in the light of the teachings of Christ and the words of the Apostles in the Epistles. Self examination, including sins of omission, is necessary in order to be honest with

yourself and with God. Keep short accounts with God.

## **D**elighting in your Word and your will obediently

***"Delight yourself also in the Lord; and he shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4).***

***"I delight to do thy will, O my God: thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).***

***"But his delight is in the law (Word) of the Lord; and in his law (Word) doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).***

Read no less than one chapter a day (absolute minimum) and preferably three chapters a day, beginning in Matthew and reading through the New Testament (260 chapters). If you are not doing this, start now! You do have time. Just cut out one 30-minute TV program! To be in fellowship with God, you must read or hear His Word daily.

## **E**ntering your throne room frequently

***"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him and***

**“bless His name” (Psalm 100:4).**

**“Evening morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud and He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:21).**

**“At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments” (Psalm 119:62).**

Some prayers may be long and some short, but even a frequent single sentence prayer in silence will benefit you spiritually.

**F**orgiving others their trespasses sincerely

**“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when ye pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them. And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:24-26).**

**“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” (Ephesians 4:32).**

Holding a grudge, resenting others, clinging to the memories of past unkind experiences is not good for

your own mental and spiritual health. But what is more, an unforgiving attitude hinders your prayers.

Perhaps you feel someone in your family or church family has mistreated you . . . pray for him or her, forgive in your heart. Don't let negative thinking and unforgiveness hurt you. Talk to God about it. He will heal your soul.

**G**iving thanks in everything daily

**“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).**

**“I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, all that are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour” (1 Timothy 2:1-3).**

Make a list of things for which you are thankful. “So count your many blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”

**H**umbling myself before you humanly

**“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he**

**shall lift you up” (James 4:10).**

**“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble” (James 4:6).**

**“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6).**

With a humble and submissive spirit in your heart, remember that Jesus became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 5:8).

**I**nterceding for others regularly

**“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance for all saints...and for me (Ephesians 6:18, 19).**

I advise you to make an alphabetical list of individuals for whom you can pray often, fold it, and keep it in your Bible.

Remember that Jesus Himself “ever lives to make intercession for you” (Hebrews 7:25) and that the Holy Spirit within us “helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:26).

**J**oying in the Holy Spirit internally

***“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17).***

***“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice” (Philippians 4:5).***

In Galatians 5:22, Paul sets forth the fruit of the indwelling Spirit in your heart, mind, and life. The first three things mentioned are love, joy, and peace. The words joy and rejoice occur over 300 times in the Bible. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

**Knowing that you hear me confidently**

***“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him” (1 John 5:14, 15).***

Now God knows what is best for us. Sometimes the answer is yes and other times (because He knows all things) the answer is no. Other times, the answer is wait. Ask always for His leadership and guidance.

**Loving you imperfectly but deeply**

***“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,***

***and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37, 38).***

***“Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5).***

***“I love you, O Lord my strength” (Psalm 18:1).***

**Let His love flow into your heart. “Now continue faith, hope and love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).**

**Meditating on you nightly**

***“When I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches” (Psalm 63:5).***

***“My meditation of Him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord” (Psalm 104:24).***

If you awake in the night, think briefly of the Lord and His love and kindness...***“I will meditate in thy statutes...” (Psalm 119:48).***

***“At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee.” (Psalm 119:62).***

Remember that He watches over you, as David mentioned in **Psalm 4:8: “I will both lay me down and sleep, for you only make me dwell in safety.”**

**Needing you constantly**

***“Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).***

Always be ready to breathe a short prayer to our Lord. “I need thee every hour, thank you for being nearby.”

**Opening my heart longingly**

***“Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23, 24).***

Always be open with God. He knows all about you anyway.

**Praising your name happily**

***“Let my soul live and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me” (Psalm 119:75).***

***“While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being” (Psalm 146:2).***

***“I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12).***

Both privately and in our worship services, it is well that we “offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

## **Quieting my mind peacefully**

***“For thus saith the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).***

***“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength” (Isaiah 26:3, 4).***

Jesus quieted the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He can quiet storms and uncertainties in your heart and mind too. Turn to Him.

## **Remembering your wonderful works thoughtfully**

***“I call to remembrance my song in the night” (Psalm 77:6).***

***“I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old” (Psalm 77:11).***

***“Thou are the God that doest wonders; thou hast***

***declared thy strength among the people” (Psalm 77:14).***

Peter, the apostle, not long before his martyrdom, “thought it proper to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. . .” (2 Peter 1:13). He has done wonderful things for you.

## **Singing with grace to you heartily**

***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).***

At home, in your church, in your car, anywhere sing and listen to the hymns of the faith, the simple words of praise, giving thanks (see Ephesians 5:19, 20).

## **Trusting you with all my heart expectantly**

***“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6).***

These powerful words, penned by King Solomon 3,000 years ago (under divine inspiration) are applicable to believers today

and have been for all times past, present, and future. Let us put them into practice in our lives now.

## **Understanding that you will guide me faithfully**

***“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou should go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psalm 32:8).***

***“Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law; yea I shall observe it with my whole heart (Psalm 119:34).***

Let our prayers rise to the Lord daily and continue to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

## **Vowing my loyalty to you fervently**

***“Lord, remember David and all of his afflictions: how he sware unto the Lord and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob: Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed, I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob” (Psalm 132:104).***

In this passage, David emphasized his vow to select the place for the Temple of Solomon to be

erected in the future. Likewise we can vow our loyalty to Him.

## **W**orshipping you in spirit and truth reverently

***“For God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).***

In these words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman early in Christ’s ministry, the supreme principle of worship is presented in simplicity. True worship is through the Holy Spirit and as revealed in the truth of God’s Word.

## **X**amining myself before you carefully

***“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).***

***“Examine me, O Lord and prove me” (Psalm 26:2)***

***“But let a man (or woman) examine himself (herself)” (1 Corinthians 11:28).***

Self examination with honesty will doubtless lead to some confession and forgiveness, for you are a child of God, justified by faith and in Christ forever.

## **Y**ielding my body to you sacrificially

***“I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (spiritual worship)” (Romans 12:1).***

***“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:13).***

This is a powerful principle and the crux of the truth concerning personal commitment, dedication, and surrender to the will of God. This really is the crowning call to become a total disciple of Jesus Christ, indwelt and empowered by the Spirit of God. It will take time and practice to have this underlying foundation of the dedicated Christian life.

## **Z**eroing in on your will for me submissively

***“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).***

***“Therefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord***

*Jim Combs was the editor of the Baptist Bible Tribune 1983-1995*