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## **Prayer That Is Pleasing to the Lord**

*By David Wilkerson*

February 12, 1996 I want to talk to you today about a kind of prayer that is most pleasing to the Lord. You see, not all of our praying blesses the heart of God. Yet, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I trust that what I share with you here will change the way you pray - from now until Jesus comes!

I have no intention of complicating prayer. It has been made too complicated already by well-intentioned teachers who have turned it into formulas, strategies and theatrics. Some Christians literally put on combat boots and uniforms to dress the part of "prayer warriors." Others attend prayer meetings where they are given "prayer guides," booklets that tell them how to fill up the hours they'll be there.

I am not condemning any of this. But I would like to show you the kind of praying I believe pleases the Lord most. Actually, the kind of prayer that most pleases God is very simple and easy to understand. It is so simple, in fact, a little child can pray in a way that pleases Him.

Let me begin by saying, I believe most Christians want to pray. At one time in our walk with the Lord, we all prayed with some consistency. But after a while, many believers quit. And now they are convicted by their prayerlessness.

The disciples said to Jesus, "...Lord, teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1). They would not have asked unless they had wanted to learn. And I believe that most who are reading this message would love to be faithful in prayer - but they don't know how. The problem is, they simply don't understand the purpose of prayer. And until they grasp this vital purpose, they will never be able to maintain a fulfilled, meaningful life of prayer.

Many Christians pray only out of a sense of obligation. They think of prayer as something they are "supposed" to do. They tell themselves, "Others around me are always praying. And the pastor is always provoking us to pray. Besides that, the Bible calls for prayer. So, I have to pray. It's just the Christian thing to do."

Others pray only when tragedy strikes or when a crisis befalls them. And they do not pray again until the next difficulty comes along.

Beloved, the church will never understand the importance of prayer until we grasp this foundational truth:

**Prayer Is Not Just for Our Own Welfare or Relief - But for the Delight of the Lord!** Unless these two elements go together, we do not have a foundation upon which to build a prayer life. Prayer is not just for our benefit - but for the delight of our God! We are not just to intercede for things we need, but to ask for the things He desires.

Christians can be very self-centered and selfish when it comes to prayer. Often we go to the Lord only to unburden our troubles and sorrows to Him - to seek a supply of strength for the next battle. Of course, that is Scriptural; we are invited to come boldly to God's throne of grace, to find mercy and help in our times of need. He has told us to cast all our cares upon Him.

But our praying is not complete - it is not prayer that is most pleasing to the Lord - if we do not understand God's need! Whereas we seek relief and help from the Lord, He desires fellowship with us

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- intimacy and communion.

Our primary purpose in praying ought always to be fellowship with the Lord. After all, He already has made every provision for our daily needs:

"...Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.... Behold the fowls of the air...your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

"...your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take no thought for the morrow..." (Matthew 6:25-26, 32-34). "...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (verse 8).

God is saying to us: "When you come into My presence, focus your attention on fellowship with Me - on getting to know Me. Don't let your focus be on material things. I know what your needs are. You don't even have to ask - I'll take care of them all! Just seek Me. Let us enjoy sweet communion!"

Yet, how much of our prayer time is spent asking God for a better job, a better home, food, clothes and other necessities? If most Christians subtracted such petitions from their prayer time, there would be little or no prayer left!

Perhaps prayer is a burden to you. Do you pray mostly out of a sense of obligation? Is prayer boring to you? Is it more of a duty than a pleasure?

So few Christians enter God's presence with delight, simply for the pleasure of His company. Some think of it only as "work" - labor, exertion, effort. Yet, when we commune with a dearly loved one here on earth, do we think of it as work? No - that is a pleasure to us! If you are happily married, you don't think of your times of intimacy with your spouse as "work."

How many marriages have been ruined by a mate who thought of intimacy only as duty? There is a generation of older Christian women who taught their daughters that intimacy with a husband was only a difficult, burdensome duty. They considered it to be work, an obligation, with no delight at all.

Yet Christ likens His relationship with His people to that of a husband and wife - and the Bible says Jesus delights in us! The fact is, a husband's pleasure in enjoying intimacy is not simply the satisfaction of his own needs. No - his real pleasure is in the joy of knowing his wife shares his delight. He says in his heart, "She really wants to be with me. I'm first in her heart - I'm everything to her!"

She is not reluctant to enjoy intimacy with him. She doesn't see it as a duty or obligation. Rather, she delights in him. And when he reaches out to her, she reciprocates by reaching out to him. They delight equally in each other.

We know the Lord delights in His people. The Bible tells us: "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" (Song of Solomon 7:6). And David said, "...he delivered me, because he delighteth in me" (Psalm 18:19). Can you imagine the Lord being exuberant with delight over His children? That is the picture Scripture gives us. Our God delights in us!

Yet, do we delight in Him? The Bible tells us the Lord should be our delight: "Delight thyself also in the

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Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4). "...I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song of Solomon 2:3).

Now, delighting in the Lord doesn't mean simply being gleeful or happy in His presence. I asked the Lord what the expression "delighting" means. He answered:

"David, delighting in Me means simply being able to say: 'I would rather be with Jesus than with anyone else on earth! I prefer His company even over that of my spouse, my family, my friends. I prefer Him over all celebrities, world leaders, famous people, even great men and women of God. I would rather spend time with Him than with anybody else. He is my delight!'

"It also means being able to say, 'I long to be shut in with Him - because He is the only One who can satisfy me. All others leave me empty and unfulfilled. No one but Jesus can touch my deepest needs. And I rush to Him as often as I can!'"

Indeed, Jesus is waiting for us with every resource - everything we need for comfort, strength and power. Yet, often we either sit and brood in His presence, or we rush off to phone a friend to try to find help. Can you imagine what that must do to His heart?

Our "delighting" is something the Lord recognizes in us. He knows when we are drawn to His presence. If we truly delight in Him, everything that hinders us from coming to Him will bother us. We'll grow lonely, heartsick for Him, knowing that nothing else can touch or fill that deep spot in our hearts. No prayer can be wholly pleasing to Him until He is assured we come to Him because we prefer Him. He wants to know that above all else!

Coming to the Lord With Delight Does Not Mean We Cannot Come to Him With Sadness and Grief. Keep in mind my definition of "delighting in the Lord" - that is, preferring to be with Him above all others. This gives new meaning to our times of being sad, downcast, heavy-hearted, confused. To whom do we run in such times? Whose company do we prefer then?

Hannah is an example of a woman who came daily into the Lord's presence. She came to the temple sad of heart - weeping, with a sorrowful spirit. "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore" (1 Samuel 1:10).

Hannah shared her husband with another wife, Peninnah, who had borne several children. Hannah had remained barren, and Peninnah harassed her about it day and night. Scripture says this woman "provoked (Hannah) sore" (verse 6), making her life miserable.

Now, Hannah was dearly loved by her husband. But even he could not comfort her nor abate her sorrow. He said to her, "...am I not better to thee than ten sons?" (verse 8). Yet Hannah must have thought, "You don't understand. I have a need you can't meet!"

So Hannah stood before the altar weeping, sorrowful, with a deep groaning in her spirit. She testified to Eli, the priest: "...I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I...have poured out my soul before the Lord....out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto" (verses 15-16).

Hannah was not afraid to come into the Lord's presence with her sadness. In fact, in her sorrow she preferred His company. Yet many believers today simply will not come into God's presence because they are sad, downcast, weeping, broken, going through trials. They say, in essence, "I don't want to

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offend God by coming to Him this way. I'll wait till I'm happy and joyful before I come into His presence."

We're accustomed to going before the Lord corporately with hand-clapping, praises, joyful worship. But this account of Hannah makes it clear we're to come to Him even in our saddest moments. And, as Hannah was in intimate prayer with the Lord, He spoke peace to her heart: "...So (she) went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (verse 18).

This passage tells me: "Don't hide from the Lord. Don't run anywhere else. Run straight into His presence, and weep it all out before Him! Tell Him everything you're going through. Let Him have all your sadness."

Yet we all tend to shy away from the Lord during our sad times. I recently had a time of unexplained sadness. There was no real reason for it; it was just one of those heavy times I couldn't understand. I hesitated to go to prayer that morning, thinking, "I'll wait till this evening. Then I'll be okay. I can have my time with the Lord then."

But the Holy Spirit prompted me to turn to the book of Nehemiah. As I read chapter 2, I saw something I hadn't seen before. This chapter contains an encouraging story for all who come to the Lord with a heavy heart.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. He tasted the wines before they were brought to the king's table, making sure they weren't poisoned. Over time, Nehemiah became a trusted servant to the king.

Now, Nehemiah had received a report from his brother Hanani that Jerusalem was in ruins. The population had been decimated, the people were in terrible straits, and conditions were worsening daily. This tore at Nehemiah's heart. He loved Judah and Jerusalem - and a sorrow and sadness began to grip him. Scripture says:

"And it came to pass...I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid..." (Nehemiah 2:1-2).

You must understand - people were forbidden to come into the king's presence with sadness, especially if they were court employees. Nehemiah knew this could have cost him his head, and he was terribly fearful.

But the king was moved with compassion when he saw the grief of Nehemiah. Scripture tells us he gave his downcast servant a leave of absence. He also gave him a letter of credit, opening the royal treasury to him. Nehemiah then received from the king the desire of his heart - permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and city walls!

Here is my point: If it were possible for Nehemiah to go into the presence of a pagan king with a sad, heavy countenance, and yet find favor, compassion and blessings beyond imagination - how much more will King Jesus show compassion to each of us His children in our sadness, lifting our burden and supplying our need? Would a pagan king show more mercy to a downcast servant than our all-merciful Savior and King would?

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Perhaps at this point you are confident you love the Lord and delight in Him. You have learned to run to Him just for the pleasure of His company. And in your wonderful times of intimacy with Him, He lifts all your burdens and floods your soul with peace, joy, assurance of His love.

But is that the end-purpose of prayer? Is it to give us ecstasy - to provide us with rest and peace? No! There is much more to this matter of praying in a way that's pleasing to God:

If We Are Going to Pray in Manner Pleasing to the Lord, We Must Learn to Pray Through!"Praying through" is a term coined by the early Pentecostals. To some it meant simply staying on your knees until you were assured you had an answer from God. To others it meant continually coming back to the Lord until you had the answer in hand. (This was also called "persevering in prayer.")

As a young boy in those early camp meetings, I heard people testify, "I'm going to lay hold of the horns of the altar - and I won't let go until God answers!" Yet I don't believe that is the truest meaning of "praying through."

You can be shut in with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, delighting in His presence. You can spend quality hours, even days, with Him, glorying in sweet communion. You can have all your needs met. Your heart can be totally satisfied. His presence can heal you, lift you, empower you, strengthen you.

But what happens when you leave that hallowed place of intimate communion? You may rise up from your knees only to go back to a crushing situation that has not changed. You can see the devil waiting there for you, ready to throw the same problems and emptiness at you. I ask you: What good is it to get the glory on the mountain if it won't see you through your battle?

Let me explain what I believe is meant by "praying through." The phrase means simply this: The strength, power and encouragement you receive from the Lord while shut in with Him must see you through the trials ahead! The victory you get in the secret closet has to give you victory on the battlefield.

Think about it: What exactly did you get from your time of prayer, if it wasn't something that could see you through the battle? Was yours a "completed" prayer? You see, "praying through" means waiting for the completion of your prayer - that is, for total completion. Many Christians see only half-answered prayers - because they don't allow what they received from the Lord in prayer to carry them through their trial. Indeed, many sincere prayers have been wasted, aborted, lost - because they were not "carried through" in this way.

How many of us have gone to the Lord in prayer, unburdening our hearts to Him - and afterward were lifted out of a pit, our joy restored, our faith rising up? The first thing He tells us in our time with Him is, "Don't be afraid. I am with you." He settles our spirit, bringing us rest and peace. And we go out of His presence feeling strong, ready to fight the good fight.

But what happens the next day, when a trial arises? How do you react when your circumstances begin to fall in on you? Do you collapse after only a short while?

Many of us get discouraged when our circumstances don't change after much prayer. We believe God for a change - and, indeed, many times He does bring one about. But in the times when He doesn't, we often go from a wonderful mountaintop experience straight into a battle - and we fail miserably!

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Beloved, prayer is not finished - it is not "completed prayer" - until it sees you through to the other side of your trial. We have not "prayed it through" until we have "lived it through" - that is, lived through our trials by the strength we received in God's presence.

God fully intends that what He gives us in prayer will fully supply us with everything we need for our battle. He wants to give us something powerful enough to see us through any situation - to place us above the battle!

I must confess, this is where I fail most in prayer. I have known and enjoyed the ecstasy of intimacy with my Lord; He has become my delight. I know what it is like to run to Him with heaviness, sorrow, tears flowing - and to experience His awesome touch, filling me with peace and relief. But when I face the next trial or crisis that comes along, all of my peace and joy seem to evaporate. I discover I have not yet prayed through!

Has this ever happened to you? Perhaps you went to church and were blessed, coming out of the sanctuary with a sense of power and anointing. Yet, when you got home, you got into an argument with your spouse. Then you went to work on Monday, and everything went wrong. Where, at that moment, was the joy, peace and rest you got from being in the Lord's presence not long before? Your prayer has not been prayed through!

Somewhere between the glory and the crisis, we lose everything we gained during our intimacy with the Lord. So, how can we keep it? What can we do to see our prayer through to a triumphant conclusion?

I have prayed about this continually because of the many Christians everywhere who are hurting so badly. Our ministry receives between 30,000 and 40,000 letters a month from our readers - and I have never heard of such pain as I now read in these letters.

Many Christians are suffocating from a loneliness that is so bad, they can hardly see themselves through a day. Others are suffering through all kinds of marital and family problems. Pastors are grief-stricken over all the hurting people in their congregations.

As I read of such grief, I have to cry out to God, "Father, I can't write a message that will add to their burden. Please, Lord - what am I to say?"

The answer I received is the message I am writing to you today: The Lord wants you to receive something from your intimate time with Him - to have a power and authority that will carry you through your trials. He wants you to pray through them completely!

"But how?" you ask. "How can I maintain the victory I receive in my prayer time with Him? How can I take it through to the other side of the battle?"

There are two things we must do to pray through our trial:

The First Way We Learn to Pray Through Is by Listening! Most Christians don't listen to God. They go to Him only to talk! Yet the Scriptures reveal that any person who was ever used of God learned to remain in His presence until hearing from Him.

Scripture makes it clear the Lord wants to talk to every one of us: "And thine ears shall hear a word

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behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

I heard of a little girl who was dying of leukemia. As she neared death's door, she struggled with the thought of dying. Yet one morning, when her mother came into her room, the girl was all aglow and happy. "What has happened to you?" her mother asked.

The little girl answered, "An angel came to me and said I was going on a trip. God came and took my hand and walked with me through a beautiful garden. He told me, 'You're coming here tomorrow, to be with Me.'"

God spoke to that little child - and took all the pain and fear from her heart! When she left to be with Him the next day, she had total peace.

Tell me - when you are intimate with Jesus, do you receive such direction from Him? Does He tell you what to do - and when and how to do it? Some Christians don't believe God does this. But Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice...and they follow me" (John 10:27).

There is no way through your trial, except to get alone with Jesus and cry, "Lord, You're the only One on this earth who can help me. Only You know the way through this trial. So I'm going to stay here till You tell me what to do. I'm not going anywhere until You speak to my heart!"

This is the kind of "praying through" that is pleasing to God! It means stopping everything, all activity, until you hear His voice. Only then will you hear Him speak clearly to your heart: "You've got to make things right with this person..." Or, "You've got to make restitution here..." Or, "Just stand still till next week. Don't get in a hurry. Sit in My presence and trust Me..." He will give you clear directions!

Yet, something even more is needed for us to see our prayers through the coming trials - to make our prayers complete:

The Second Thing Needed to Pray Through Is to Add to Our Intimacy Total Confidence in God's Word! Christ is the living Word of God. And when you are shut in with Him in prayer, the Holy Spirit will always lead you to God's revealed Word. He will build up your faith by feeding you from the Bible - even while you're in the secret closet! We are commanded:

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day... And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:11, 13, 17).

Often when you receive specific instructions from the Lord, His Spirit will whisper, "Now turn to...", directing you to a passage of Scripture. God's Word will speak to you directly - telling you how to get through your crisis!

Right now, there are many Christians reading this message who simply have to hear a word from the Lord. Nobody on earth can help them. There is but one way for them to get through their trial - and that is by staying in Christ's presence until He gives them direction! He must tell them the way through - what to do, and when and how to act. His exclusive direction to them won't come one minute too early or too late. It will all be in the Holy Ghost's timing!

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Dear saint, there is no need for you to worry about your trial. God is faithful to respond to your every need and request. So, as you go to prayer now, simply pray, "Lord, I come now not just to have my needs met - needs You have foreseen and are eager to supply. No - I come also to meet Your need!"

We were made for fellowship with Him - even in our heaviest times. I ask you: Do you love to be with Him? Do you prefer Him above all others? Does your heart cry out, "Jesus, You're my everything. You are my soul's great pleasure - and I love Your company!"

God, put in all of us a heart that is easily wooed to Your presence. Help us to pray through all our trials to completion...to listen closely to Your Spirit in our secret time of communion with You...and to put all our confidence in Your revealed Word. In these ways, we can know our prayers are pleasing to You. Amen!

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