

# *The* **BATTLE PLAN** *for* **PRAYER**

FROM BASIC TRAINING TO TARGETED STRATEGIES

## **LESSON 2**

### **HOW: The Locks of Prayer**



*“Surely God will not listen to an empty cry.” (Job 35:13)*

*“Surely God will refuse to answer [the cry which is] vanity (vain and empty—instead of abiding trust); neither will the Almighty regard it—” (Job 35:13 AMPC)*

Accessing God through prayer is not meant to be like cracking a safe. He hasn't hidden the combination so that all we can do is hope to land on the right coordinates— otherwise we're blocked out. And yet because He knows everything and understands the dynamic of His holiness versus our sinfulness, God Himself decides and directs us regarding how prayer works, not us. At the same time, life on earth is an unavoidable battle *“against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens”* (Eph. 6:12 hcsb). God has graciously, protectively given us rules to help our prayer and our warfare be successful.

*“I will not leave you as orphans,”* Jesus said to His followers (John 14:18). He didn't want His disciples left alone to the wolves like an abandoned child without anyone to care for them and lead them. So God in His Word delivered some rules of engagement to make us rough, tough, and battle ready for the difficult days ahead. Think of them not as boxes to check off and follow, but as guides that show us how to transform prayer into a truly rewarding experience. Think of them as expert training tips from a master Teacher whose desire is to send us out there fully prepared, never caught off guard, moving bravely into attack position.

Over the years, we've categorized twenty of these biblical principles into what we call the **“Locks and Keys”** of prayer. Ten of them are principles that bog down our praying and restrict its freedom and effectiveness. The other ten, however, give prayer a burst of second wind and third wind, pushing it beyond all limits. In this chapter, we'll look at the ten locks of prayer.

**1. Praying without knowing God through Jesus.** Prayer is obviously a fairly universal response when a person is under heavy attack. How many interior hallway closets have turned into prayer closets when a tornado is bearing down? God, of course, can answer any request He chooses from any person who asks. But when it comes to knowing God as Father and walking with Him in answered prayer, Jesus said, *“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6). Just as people who don't share much common ground in their relationship have a hard time keeping conversation going, those who

haven't believed in God for the forgiveness of their sins cannot expect God to feel obligated to respond.

**2. Praying from an unrepentant heart.** The Bible says God *"knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust"* (Ps. 103:14 hcsb). He's not surprised by our struggle to remain steadfast. But He also looks at our hearts, and He knows when we are *"broken"* by our sin (Ps. 51:17). The trouble comes, however, when our hearts aren't broken at all— when we're cold and indifferent toward His Word and our transgressions of it. As the writer of Psalm 66:18 said, *"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened"* (NIV). When we cling to our sin and stiff-arm God, then He will stiff-arm our prayers until we are willing to repent. If we're determined to be the one who calls the shots in our lives, we shoot ourselves in the foot as far as our prayer is concerned.

**3. Praying for show.** People who pray merely to impress others had better enjoy those people's *"amens"* and compliments while they last. Because according to Jesus, that's the full extent of the reward. *"When you pray,"* He said, *"you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full"* (Matt. 6:5). Public prayers that have not been seasoned by private prayers are hardly worth the hot air required to speak them. Always remember, even when you're leading others in prayer, you're still addressing an audience of One.

**4. Praying repetitive, empty words.** Prayer can take a lot of forms. It can be spoken off the cuff. It can be written out and read word for word. It can be so deep and heartfelt that it only comes out as single syllables. One thing that makes our praying land with a thud of wasted words is when we're talking and talking but aren't even listening to what we're saying. Jesus said, *"When you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him"* (Matt. 6:7–8). Sure, there's discipline and duty behind prayer. We don't always feel like praying, even when we do it. But we all know when we've let prayer devolve into nothing but canned, thoughtless, mindless words. And no one—not even God—likes to be on the receiving end of that kind of thoughtless conversation.

**5. Prayers not prayed.** Surely the most ineffective prayers of all are those we never even take the time to pray. As James said, *"You do not have because you do not ask"* (James 4:2). How many times do we just motor past Him, never braking for directions or advice, too busy and in too much of a hurry to stop and seek His counsel? We meant to pray. We thought about it. But we were never able to work it into our schedule. Therefore, we should not expect an unprayed prayer to receive anything other than unsatisfying silence.

**6. Praying with a lustful heart.** Some of us never outgrow our tendency to ask God for things we want only because we think they'll be our source of happiness rather than Him. "You ask and do not receive," James said, "*because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures*" (James 4:3). If lust, greed, bitterness, or pride are motivations for requesting something, then God will not be pleased to respond. Like a wise parent with a pushy child, God knows what to give us for our good . . . and what not to give us for our good as well. But if we love Him most, then He takes delight in giving us good things we desire. Psalm 37:4 says, "*Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*"

**7. Praying while mistreating your spouse.** When we're not treating with love and respect the one person in our life whom we've vowed to treat with love and respect, God makes special mention of it as an inhibitor to prayer. His warning is primarily to men: "*Husbands . . . live with your wives in an understanding way . . . and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered*" (1 Pet. 3:7). But the same principle obviously cuts both ways. How can we expect to be at peace with God in prayer when we are sowing disunity in our own homes? Being ugly to our wives (or husbands) is a backbreaker in prayer.

**8. Praying while ignoring the poor.** Scripture is replete with the compassion of God for the poor, the needy, the helpless victim, the voiceless, and those who suffer persecution and injustice. When you show compassion to those in need, God shows favor on your requests. But the opposite is true as well. "*He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered*" (Prov. 21:13). If you snub the poor and destitute as if they're less than human, an eyesore— or just completely invisible— expect to feel blockage in your experience of prayer. Needy sinners like ourselves shouldn't feel more deserving of the Father's care and notice than the needy around us.

**9. Praying with bitterness in your heart toward someone.** It is sinful to receive God's forgiveness, totally undeserved, and then consider ourselves exempt from the command and responsibility of forgiving others who've offended us. "*Whenever you stand praying,*" Jesus said, "*forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions*" (Mark 11:25–26). Bitterness is a toxin that not only poisons us spiritually, mentally, even physically, but also poisons the effectiveness of prayer and the full experience of our relationship with God.

**10. Praying with a faithless heart.** One final barrier to prayer is the basic prerequisite of belief. Hebrews 11:6 says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*" Whenever we don't trust someone and are convinced they don't have the capability or willingness to do what they say, a breach clouds that relationship. The same thing happens when we don't believe God can help us with

what we need. We should “ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:6–8). Lukewarm belief is the weakest form of praying. Doubt locks us out of our own prayer closets.

### **PRAYER:**

*Lord, reveal to me anything that is hindering my prayer life, and help me get rid of it quickly. If there is any arrogance in me, pretense, manipulation, bitterness, ruthlessness, or a lack of faith in You, forgive and cleanse me, Lord. I forgive those who have wronged me as You have forgiven me. I thank You for Your kindness and patience. I'm tired of being the one who's blocking myself from being as close to You as possible and receiving what You desire to give me. Unhinge me, I pray, from any locks of prayer. Open me up so You can work without hindrance through me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Kendrick, Stephen; Kendrick, Alex (2015-07-05). The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies (Kindle Locations 888-891). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.**

### **HOMEWORK:**

1. 'Accessing God through' what? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What does this 'accessing God' means to you?
  - ☞ 'accessing' defines 'the ability, right, or permission to approach, enter, speak with, or use; admittance'.
  - ☞ 'God' is '\_\_\_\_\_'. (John 4:24)
  - ☞ **Translation:** “we are accessing in the 'spiritual', 'heavenly', and 'invisible' realm”.
3. 'Accessing God through prayer' **IS NOT MEANT** to be like cracking a safe. God **HASN'T HIDDEN** the combination so that all we can do is \_\_\_\_\_ to land on the right coordinates—otherwise we're \_\_\_\_\_.
4. God knows everything and understands the dynamic of His holiness vs. our \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Who decides and directs you about how prayer works?
6. You are here on earth and you face 4 unavoidable battles? Can you identify 4 unavoidable battles against?

7. **Y N NS:** Has God graciously protectively give you rules to help your prayer and your warfare be successful?
8. **Y N NS:** Are you an orphans here?
9. **Y N NS:** Jesus wants you His disciple left alone to the wolves like an abandoned child without anyone to care for them and lead them?
10. God in His Word delivered some rules of engagement to make us \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ for the difficult days ahead.
11. You think of them not as boxes to check off and follow, but as guides that show you how to **TRANSFORM** [your] prayer into a what?
12. You think of them as \_\_\_\_\_ from a master Teacher whose desire is to send you out there **FULLY PREPARED, NEVER CAUGHT OFF GUARD, MOVING BRAVELY INTO** what?
13. Who is your master Teacher? \_\_\_\_\_
14. **DEFINE** this ‘...send you out there **FULLY PREPARED, NEVER CAUGHT OFF GUARD, MOVING BRAVELY INTO ATTACK POSITION**’ means to you?

### **THE LOCKS AND KEYS OF PRAYER:**

15. **TEN BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES** \_\_\_\_\_ **YOUR PRAYING AND**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **ITS FREEDOM AND EFFECTIVENESS.**
16. **FIRST KEY: PRAYING** \_\_\_\_\_ **KNOWING GOD THROUGH JESUS.**
  - ☞ Jesus said, “I am the WAY, and the TRUTH, and the LIFE; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)
  - ☞ Just as people who don’t share much common ground in their relationship have a \_\_\_\_\_ keeping conversation going, those who haven’t believed in God for the forgiveness of their sins cannot expect God to feel obligated to respond.
17. **SECOND KEY: PRAYING FROM AN** \_\_\_\_\_ **HEART.**
  - ☞ God knows all about us. God knows we are made from dust. (Psalms 103:14 ERV)
  - ☞ **Y N NS:** Is God surprise or shock by your struggle to remain steadfast?
    - God looks at your heart and know when you are ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ ’ by your \_\_\_\_\_ . (Ps. 51:17)

- ✓ The trouble comes, however, when your heart **ISN'T BROKEN AT ALL**—when you're \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ toward His Word and your transgression [breaking all His laws] of it.
- ☞ David said in Psalms 66:18, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened". When you cling [cherish, precious] to your sin and \_\_\_\_\_ [resist, cold-shoulder, brush off, scorn, forget, neglect, pass over] God, then God will \_\_\_\_\_ your prayers until you are \_\_\_\_\_ to repent.

18. **THIRD KEY: PRAYING FOR \_\_\_\_\_.**

- ☞ Jesus said, "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to stand in the synagogues [Jewish churches] and on the street corners and pray loudly. They want people to see them. The truth is, that's all the reward they will get." (Matthew 6:5 ERV)
- ☞ People who pray merely [simple] to \_\_\_\_\_ others had better enjoy those people's 'AMENS' and \_\_\_\_\_ while they last [after all others; latest].
- ☞ ALWAYS remember, even when you're leading others in prayer, you're still addressing an audience of One. Who is 'One'? \_\_\_\_\_

19. **FOURTH KEY: PRAYING \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ WORDS.**

- ☞ Jesus said, "When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again." (Matthew 6:7 NLT)
- Prayer can take a lot of forms.
- Prayer can be spoken off the cuff.
- Prayer can be written out and read the word for word.
- Prayer can be so deep and heartfelt that it only comes out as single syllables.
- One thing that makes our praying land with a thud of \_\_\_\_\_ words is when we're talking and talking but aren't even listening to what we're saying.
- ☞ Jesus said, "Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. **THE FOCUS WILL SHIFT FROM YOU TO GOD**, and you will begin to sense His grace." (Matthew 6:6 MSG)

☞ Sure, there's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ behind prayer.

20. **FIFTH KEY: PRAYER \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYED.**

- ☞ James 4:2 VOC quotes, "...you don't have because you have **CHOSEN NOT TO ASK.**"

- ☞ Surely the most **INEFFECTIVE** prayers of all are those we \_\_\_\_\_ even take the time to pray.
- ☞ Therefore, we should not expect an unsprayed prayer to receive anything other than unsatisfying silence.

21. **SIXTH KEY: PRAYING WITH A \_\_\_\_\_ HEART.**

- ☞ James 4:3 ERV says, “Or when you ask, you don’t receive anything, because the **REASON YOU ASK IS WRONG**. You only want to use it for your own pleasure.”
- ☞ If \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ are motivations for requesting something, then God will not be pleased to respond.
- ☞ Psalms 37:4 says, “You delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”
- ☞ But if we love Him \_\_\_\_\_, then He takes delights in giving us good things we desire.

22. **SEVENTH KEY: PRAYING WHILE \_\_\_\_\_ YOUR SPOUSE.**

- ☞ 1 Peter 3:7 VOC says, “In the same way, husbands, as you live with your wives, understand the situations women face as the weaker vessel. Each of you should respect your wife and value her as an equal heir in the gracious gift of life. Do this so that nothing will get in the way of your prayers.”
- ☞ The same principle obviously cuts \_\_\_\_\_ ways. How can we expect to be at peace with God in prayer when we are sowing \_\_\_\_\_ in our own homes?
- ☞ Being ugly to our wives (or husbands) is a \_\_\_\_\_ [exhausting] in prayer.

23. **EIGHTH KEY: PRAYING WHILE \_\_\_\_\_ THE POOR.**

- ☞ Scripture is \_\_\_\_\_ [abundantly supplied or provided; filled] the compassion of God the poor, the needy, the helpless victim, the voiceless, and those who suffer persecution and injustice.
- ☞ When you show \_\_\_\_\_ to those in need, God shows \_\_\_\_\_ on your requests.
- ✂ Proverbs 21:13 ERV says, “Those who refuse to help the poor will not receive help when they need it themselves.”
- ☞ If you snub the poor and destitute as if they’re less than human, an eyesore—or just completely invisible—expect to feel blockage in your experience of prayer.

☞ Needy sinners like ourselves shouldn't feel more deserving of the Father's care and notice than the needy around \_\_\_\_\_.

## 24. **NINTH KEY: PRAYING WITH \_\_\_\_\_ IN YOUR HEART TOWARD SOMEONE.**

✂ Mark 11:26 VOC says, "If you don't forgive others, **DON'T EXPECT** God's forgiveness."

☞ It is \_\_\_\_\_ to receive God's forgiveness, totally undeserved, and then consider ourselves \_\_\_\_\_ from the command and responsibility of forgiving others who've offended us.

☞ Bitterness is a \_\_\_\_\_ that not only poisons us spiritually, mentally, even physically, but also poisons the \_\_\_\_\_ of prayer and the full \_\_\_\_\_ of our relationship with God.

## 25. **TENTH KEY: PRAYING WITH A \_\_\_\_\_ HEART.**

✂ Hebrews 11:6 VOC says, "**WITHOUT FAITH** no one can please God because the person coming to God **MUST BELIEVE** He exists, and He rewards those who come seeking."

☞ One final barrier to prayer is the basic prerequisite [required beforehand] of \_\_\_\_\_.

☞ Whenever we don't trust someone and are convinced they don't have the \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ to do what they say, a breach [a result of breaking] \_\_\_\_\_ [obscure, darken] that relationship.

☞ The same thing happens when we **DON'T BELIEVE** God can help us with what we need.

✂ James 1:6-8 VOC quotes, "The KEY is that your request be anchored by your single-minded commitment to God. Those who depend only on their own judgment are like those lost on the seas, carried away by any wave or picked up by any wind. Those adrift on their own wisdom shouldn't assume the Lord will rescue them or bring them anything. The splinter of divided loyalty shatters your compass and leaves you dizzy and confused."

☞ \_\_\_\_\_ belief is the weakest form of praying.

☞ \_\_\_\_\_ locks us out of our own prayer closets.