

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

FROM BASIC TRAINING TO TARGETED STRATEGIES

PART III: CONDITIONING

## **LESSON 9**

### **YOUR HEART: Obedience vs. Rebellion**

*Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. (Hebrews 10:22)*

*"Let us go right in to God Himself, with true hearts fully trusting Him to receive us because we have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean and because our bodies have been washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22 The Living Bible)*

Imagine telling your children to go clean their messy rooms. Two hours later you walk in and see them in a circle on the floor, holding hands, praying for God to reveal His will about whether they should begin. You hear them asking Him to give them the spirit of cleanliness, to equip them with everything needed to straighten up what's so dirty and out of order.

Lofty prayers, but no submission. Rebellion wrapped in intercession. How would you react to that? You'd likely tell them to stop the performance and get busy doing what you'd already told them to do. Praying more is clearly not what they need to be doing at the moment. *Obedience* is.

But that's how a lot of people handle prayer. They hide behind it. They hope it will cover for disobedience in other areas that are a lot harder and more costly to do than just praying. God keeps telling them to do things, but they keep "praying about it" with no steps of action.

A lifestyle of obedience-while not a condition that earns salvation is a major key to answered prayer. If

you have a child who listens and obeys you, and another who ignores you and rebels, to which child are you more likely to give what they request? Why should anyone call Jesus "Lord, Lord" if they're not serious about doing what He says? (Luke 6:46).

The logic couldn't be more clear. And Jesus couldn't have said it more plainly: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). We're not saying we're capable of always doing things perfect, but how can we argue with His statement? To not follow Him with faith and submission while claiming total allegiance is the same as saying our love for Him is a cup of lukewarm coffee at best.

So while the idea of God telling us *not* to pray sounds counterintuitive in one sense, the fact is unavoidable: prayers generated by a rebellious heart are contradictory to one another. That's why the Bible does reveal this surprising directive on more than one occasion--telling us *not* to pray. When Joshua, for instance, was trying to understand Israel's humiliating defeat at the small city of Ai, especially after their rousing victory at the much more heavily fortified city of Jericho, God said to him, "Rise up Why is it that you have fallen on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them" (Josh. 7:10-11). The better course of action, He said, was to go find the source of the problem, remove it from the camp, and then the relationship would be restored. Stop praying and start cleaning house.

God instructed several of the prophets to halt their prayers for a wayward generation in Israel. "Do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not

hear you. Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?" (Jer. 7:16-17). He rhetorically asked—as long as they persisted in their idolatry "shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 20:31). "If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword" (Isa. 1:19-20).

Obedience matters. Not in a legalistic way. Not as a means of pride or comparison with others. But life as a follower of Christ was never meant to be a casual attempt at doing as little as necessary—just enough to get by, just enough to feel good about going to church on Sunday morning. A person who is truly in Christ is steadily moving in a direction of greater obedience to Him. "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" (1 John 3:3 & 7).

Prayer offers you the ongoing incentive to keep pursuing it. Wanting to be close to Him is worth it. The honor of being able to come to Him, praising Him, enjoying Him, on the same page with Him is an experience no "passing pleasures of sin" can ever provide (Heb.11:25). And with each victory, with each new burst of spiritual momentum, you don't want anything of yours standing in the way between yourself and Him.

"To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure." It's the "crooked" who see God as "shrewd," as if He's someone we feel the need to wrestle against and contend with (Ps. 18:25-26 NIV). Praying with a clean heart is like driving with a clean windshield. Everything God does looks better through

it.

So "beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22). Are you keeping His commandments?

Look at the things you're praying for. Consider whether you're seeing them come to fruition and be clearly marked by God's blessing. If this is *not* what's happening, it doesn't necessarily mean your life is out of phase with God's Word, that you're not walking in open-hearted obedience with Him. But have you thought about checking in, just to see? To identify any holdout of rebellion or resistance in your life that He might be using this waiting time to tug out of you? Like a gardener pulling weeds, you should join Him at the root level.

Or could it be that what you're praying for is certainly coming from a willing, well-tuned heart-but what He wants from you right now isn't more prayer? He wants action. Your work orders are piling up. Is there something you've been putting off? Forgiving someone you've been trying not to think about? Keeping a promise you've been hoping they'll forget? Sometimes our prayer requests are waiting for us to travel across the bridge of faith-filled action. Is there anything God has already told you to do that you've yet to obey? Then why not start today?

Pray and obey. Obey and pray. Put those two together, and you've got a powerful combination.

**PRAYER:** *Father, I pray You would forgive me for my past disobedience and rebellion-things I've never really confessed or done the hard work of forsaking. Wash me*

*clean and turn my heart toward obeying You quickly. Today I'm going to obey Jesus Christ. I'm going to quit resisting Him and arguing with Him and rationalizing with Him and hiding behind prayer. I'm going to obey. Lord, help me obey. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### HOMEWORK:

#### 1. The word you see 'imagine'

- ☞ You tell your children to go clean their messy rooms. Two hours later you walk in and see your children in a circle on the floor, holding hands, praying for God to reveal His will about whether they should begin.
- ☞ You hear your children asking Him:
  - to give them the spirit of \_\_\_\_\_
  - to \_\_\_\_\_ them with everything needed to straighten up what's so dirty and out of order.

#### 2. Explain this "Lofty prayers, but no submission" means to you?

#### 3. Explain this "Rebellion wrapped in intercession" means to you?

#### 4. Which one is important?

- a) see your children in a circle on the floor, holding hands, praying for God to reveal His will...
- b) tell your children to go clean their messy rooms....
- c) Both.
- d) ?

#### 5. The KEY is \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 6. That's how a lot of people handle prayer. They \_\_\_\_\_ behind it. They hope it will cover for \_\_\_\_\_ in other areas that are a lot harder and more costly to do than just praying.

#### 7. God keeps telling His children to \_\_\_\_\_ things, but His children keep 'praying about it' with \_\_\_\_\_ steps of action.

8. Name one a major key to answered prayer?

9. Which one are you more likely to give what they request?

- a) a child who ignores and rebels you
- b) a child who listens and obeys you
- c) both
- d) ?

10. If you call Jesus "Lord, Lord", are you **SERIOUS** or **NOT SERIOUS** about are you doing what Jesus says to you?

John 14:15 the Message says, "If you love Me, **SHOW IT** by doing what I've told you."

11. **Y N S**: Are you argued with His statement of John 14:15?

12. What kind 'a cup of coffee' fits 'saying your love for Jesus—but not follow Him with faith and submission while claiming total allegiance?

- a) cool
- b) best hot steamy
- c) lukewarm
- d) don't know

13. So while the idea of God telling us "\_\_\_\_\_ to pray" sounds **counterintuitive** [seemingly contrary to common sense; intelligence collected about enemy espionage] **in one sense, the fact is \_\_\_\_\_** [unable to be avoided]: **PRAYERS GENERATED** [cause to be; produced] **BY A \_\_\_\_\_ HEART ARE CONTRADICTORY TO ONE ANOTHER [\_\_\_\_\_]**.

**THE STORY OF ISRAEL'S HUMILIATING DEFEAT in Joshua 7:**

14. Suppose you are in Joshua's shoes, your church's humiliating defeat, the better course of \_\_\_\_\_ was to go:

- ☞ \_\_\_\_\_ the source of the problem,
- ☞ \_\_\_\_\_ it from the church,
- ☞ and then the relationship would be \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☞ \_\_\_\_\_ praying
- ☞ and \_\_\_\_\_ cleaning house-your church.

15. Name one that 'matters'? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Y N NS: Are you a person who is truly in Christ is steadily moving in a direction of greater obedience to Him?

1 John 3:3 Simple English Bible quotes, "Christ is pure and every person who has this hope BASED on Christ make himself pure like Christ."

1 John 3:7 Simple English Bible quotes, "Little children, don't let anyone FOOL you. Jesus is righteous. To be righteous like Jesus, a person MUST DO what is right."

17. Prayer offers you the ongoing \_\_\_\_\_ [a motivating influence, action] to keep pursuing it [\_\_\_\_\_].

18. Y N NS: Do you want to be close to Him? Is worth it?

19. The honor of:

☞ being \_\_\_\_\_ to come to Him,

☞ \_\_\_\_\_ Him,

☞ \_\_\_\_\_ Him,

- on the same page with Him is an experience \_\_\_\_\_ "passing pleasure of sin" ["..not to enjoy sin's pleasures. They only last for a short time." NiRV] can ever provide. (Hebrews 11:25)
- And with each victory, with each \_\_\_\_\_ burst of spiritual momentum, you don't want anything of yours standing in the way between yourself and Him.

20. T F: Praying with an unclean heart is like driving with an unclean windshield. Everything God doesn't look good through the windshield.

21. IMPORTANT: You look at the things you're praying for. You consider whether you're seeing them come to FRUITION [accomplishment] or NO FRUITION [no accomplishment] and be clearly marked by God's blessing.

- If this is not what's happening, it doesn't necessarily mean your life is out of phase [a stage in a process of development] with God's Word, that you're \_\_\_\_\_ walking in open-hearted obedience with Him.

- **Y N NS: Have you check in to see your FRUITION or NOT FRUITION in your spiritual walk with God, including your opened-heart obedience to God?**

**22. Take your time: please IDENTIFY any holdout of rebellion or resistance in your spiritual life that God might be using this waiting time to tug out of you? Like a gardener pulling weeds, you should join Him at the root level. Have God bring any rebellion or sin out of your heart and reveals it to you, you can immediately confess your sins and repent of it. Go back and start to walk in obedience with God. Can you? Write down or name it what God has shown you this week.**

**23. Be honest yourself: Is there anything God has already told you to do that you've yet to obey? Like Jonah? What was it that you should obey God?**

**24. T F: Pray and obey. Pray and obey. Put those two together, and you've got a powerful combination.**

**TODAY: LAST DAY CLASS. ENJOY YOUR SPRING BREAK. SEE YOU ON APRIL 3, 2016.**