

## **Overcoming Stress Through Prayer**

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION-**

- a. One of the great privileges we have as Christians...is the privilege of prayer.
- b. As followers of Jesus Christ...we have an open invitation from the God of the Bible... the God of the universe ... who is our heavenly Father.
- c. To come into His presence at any time... in any place ... in any circumstance... and as His child through Christ... God has promised that He will give us His full and undivided attention ... as if He had nothing else to do.
- d. How amazing... is the privilege of prayer!
- e. But it is also amazing how many Christians... forfeit this wonderful privilege... because of their failure to pray as they should.
- f. Your growth as a Christian... your usefulness as a Christian... your joy as a Christian... depends a great deal on the quality and depth of your prayer life.
- g. One of the great benefits of prayer... is that prayer is a great stress reliever.
- h. Today many people try to deal with stress by popping pills...drinking alcohol...doing drugs... and many other things that in the long run are harmful... and will actually add to the stress of life.
- i. Christians do not have to do any of those things... because God has given those who believe in Christ the best stress reliever there is... and that is the wonderful privilege of prayer.
- j. Nothing will relieve the stress of life better than spending time with God ... praying, worshiping and fellowshiping with Him.

- k. Nothing will calm your nerves better... nothing will give you more hope, strength, guidance and direction in life... nothing will refresh your soul better...than taking your burdens, concerns and needs... to the Lord in prayer.
- l. *Philippians 4:6-7 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*
- m. Oh... what a wonderful privilege prayer is... today... I want to remind us of some of the things... that the Bible teaches about prayer.

## **II. WHO CAN PRAY?**

- a. While anyone can pray... there is only one prayer that an unbeliever can pray that we know God will answer... and that is when they repent of their sins and pray to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- b. If out of His grace and mercy God does answer any other prayer of an unbeliever... it would only be for the purpose of intervening in that person’s life... to bring them ... and maybe others around them... to saving faith in Christ.
- c. Anyone can pray... but unless they are praying to receive Christ or unless out of His grace God answers another prayer of an unbeliever to bring them to Christ... the prayers of the person without Christ are futile.
- d. What about the prayers of those who worship in other religions and faiths... does God hear their prayers?
- e. The answer is “no”... Satan is behind all of the false and man-made religions of this world... and he is the one that those who follow those faiths are worshipping and praying too.

- f. Who then can pray prayers that are acceptable to God?... #1, Little children can pray... God will always hear the prayers of little children.
- g. A few years ago... after I had an issue after a medical procedure and had to go to the emergency room ... Aris called our daughter and told her what was happening... our daughter told our grandchildren that their Papa was in the emergency room and they needed to pray for me... so they gathered in a circle and they prayed that I would be okay... Christy and the children were at the home of their other grandmother at the time and later when I saw their other grandmother ... she told me that when all that was going on ... she walked into a bed room of her home and found my grandson Lewis crying and praying for his Papa to be okay... do you think God heard that prayer? ... I do.
- h. #2, Christians can pray... what a wonderful privilege prayer is... throughout the Bible... Christians are commanded to pray... we are taught to pray... we are encouraged... and we are exhorted to pray.
- i. The Bible is our prayer book to help us to know how to pray and what to pray for... the Holy Spirit is our prayer partner and teacher who helps to guide and empower our prayers... our fellow Christians are our partners in prayer... a church family is to be a family of prayer.
- j. When a person is born again... they are born again with a desire to pray.
- k. If all of that is true and it is... then why don't we pray more than we do?
- l. Our lack of prayer is not a matter of finding time to pray... it is not the busyness of life that hinders us from praying... that is just an excuse we use.
- m. Answer this question to yourself... how much time did you spend on the internet and on Facebook this week... watching television or on

the phone this week...as compared to the time you spent in prayer this week?

- n. If we have time to spend hours doing all that we do with our electronic gadgets... then we have time to pray.
- o. Why do Christians struggle to maintain an active and growing prayer life?... it is not the busyness of life that hinders our prayers... it is the enemy of our souls.
- p. Satan knows that if he can unplug you from God and hinder you from praying... he will make you spiritually weak... and he will make you an easier target for his temptations... so Satan is always doing everything he can to keep you from praying.
- q. So... how do we overcome the hindrance of Satan?... how do we maintain an active, alive and growing prayer life?
- r. It is very simple... you make a commitment to pray every day... you pray when you feel like it... and you pray when you don't feel like it ... you pray when things are going good... and you pray when things are not so good... you pray when you understand what is going on... and when you have no idea what is going on.
- s. If for some reason you miss a day of prayer... you ask God to forgive you and you pray the next day... you never let two days go by without a real time of prayer.
- t. And you keep on praying... and you never stop praying... and you pray every day... and you keep praying ... every day... you keep praying until the Lord calls you home to Heaven.
- u. You become such a person of prayer... that Satan cannot wait for you to get out of this world... and go on to Heaven.
- v. So who can pray?... little children can pray... God bless them... and Christians can pray.

### III. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER?

- a. #1, We do not pray to impress God... can I tell you a little secret? ... there is nothing you can do to impress God.
- b. Religion is about trying to impress God... Christianity is about loving and living for God.
- c. The more time you spend with God in real prayer, worship and fellowship... the more humble you will become... the more you spend with God and before God... the more you will realize how little you are ... and how great God is.
- d. #2, We don't pray to inform God... you can't tell God anything He doesn't know.
- e. Prayer is not about informing God... prayer is about humbling ourselves before God so that He can work in our lives ... so that He can inform us of what we need... and guide us in what we should do.
- f. #3, We don't pray to tell God what we want Him to do... God is not our servant... He is our King... He is our Lord...He is our Master... we are His servants.
- g. Prayer is not about us telling God what we want... prayer is about us seeking God's will for what He would have us to do.
- h. #4, Why do we pray?... we pray to worship God... we pray to love God... we pray to praise God... we pray to thank God... we pray to seek God's will for our lives... we pray to confess our sins and to be clean and right before God.
- i. We pray for others to be saved... to be healed... to be blessed... to be helped... we pray for guidance and direction ... we pray for the mind of Christ... we pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit ... we pray for our church and the work of God's Kingdom... we pray for our daily bread and the needs of our life... this is why we pray.

- j. We pray because prayer connects us with Heaven... we pray because we can do nothing without prayer.
- k. Prayer is as essential to the growing Christian life... as eating and breathing are to our physical life.
- l. A prayerless Christian is a weak Christian... a prayerless Christian is a useless Christian... a prayerless Christian is an easy target for Satan's temptations and traps.

#### **IV. CAN WE REALLY PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING?**

- a. Philippians 4:6 says... that we can and should pray about everything.
- b. This means that for the Christian... prayer is to be a part of our life... it means that we are to be constantly praying for guidance and direction in life... we are to constantly pray for the wisdom and strength to live the life God would have us to.
- c. But... there are some things that we don't have to pray about... if the Bible clearly says that something is right or wrong... we don't have to pray about it.
- d. You can pray about what church you should join and attend... but don't have to pray about whether you should be involved in a church or not... the Bible says you should and you should.
- e. You don't have to pray about whether you should tithe or not ... the Bible says that you should and you should.
- f. You don't have to pray about if it is okay to have an "affair" which is the modern code word for committing adultery... the Bible clearly condemns adultery and sexual immorality of every form and you should not do any of it.
- g. And, no... you are not the exception... the Lord will never lead you... guide you... or give your permission...to do something that is contrary to His Word.

- h. It is amazing how many prayers people pray... that God has already answered in His Word.
- i. I have heard people say... “I know what the Bible says... but I feel like it is okay with God if I do this.”
- j. If you ever feel like it is okay to do something that is contrary to God’s Word... then something is wrong with your feeler.
- k. That is not God leading you to do that... that is Satan.
- l. Our lives as Christians are not to be led by our feelings... but by the unchanging truth and principals of the Word of God.

**V. HOW CAN YOU BE A POWERFUL PERSON OF PRAYER?**

- a. How can you be a person of prayer?... #1, Make a prayer a priority ... make a commitment to pray every day.
- b. Satan will fight you ... your flesh will fight you... the world around you will fight you... but make a commitment to pray and stay with it... never go more than two days without a real time of prayer.
- c. Understand that if you neglect prayer... you are disarming yourself as a Christian... you are making yourself vulnerable to Satan’s temptations ... traps... and attacks.
- d. #2, Develop a plan for prayer and stick with it... read your Bible as you pray... incorporate your daily Bible reading with your prayer time... make a prayer list... start a prayer journal... having a regular time and place of prayer... a prayer closet where you pray... is helpful to developing a powerful prayer life.
- e. You might say... “I don’t need to do all of that, I am not a preacher.”
- f. Praying is not just for preachers... every Christian should be serious about developing a consistent and growing prayer life.

- g. #3, Keep your life free of unconfessed sin... unconfessed sin in our life will hinder us from praying... and it will hinder our prayers from being answered.
- h. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God... they hid themselves from God ... they knew that they had done wrong... but instead of going to God and confessing it...they ran from God...they lost fellowship with God.
- i. Unconfessed sin in our life ... hinders our walk with God ... and hinders our prayers... that is why our prayers must begin with good honest confession of our sins... asking God to forgive us of our sins... and asking God to show us sin in our life that we are blind too.
- j. *Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”*
- k. *Psalm 66:18 “If I regard iniquity (cherish sin) in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”*
- l. Jesus said in Matthew 6:14... that holding a grudge against another person and refusing to forgive them will hinder our prayers... *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*
- m. 1 Peter 3:7 says that when husbands and wives do not love, honor and respect the one they are married to... their prayers will be hindered.
- n. #4, To be a great person of prayer... enjoy your time with God... prayer is not meant to be a drudgery... it is not meant to be a chore.
- o. God loves us... believe it or not... God loves spending time with you ... He loves it when we pray and we humbly come into His presence ... to fellowship with Him... to worship Him... and to seek His wisdom, guidance, strength and will.
- p. Recently both of my grandchildren told me... “Papa, we love being with you.”... why do they love being with me?... they know that I love them... and I care about them.

- q. God may not be our Papa... but He is our “Abba Father”... He loves us like no one else does... He cares for us... we should look forward to being with Him... we should love to be in His presence.
- r. What a joy prayer is... and how we should look forward to coming into the presence of our loving Heavenly Father every day.

## **VI. CONCLUSION-**

- a. Yes... life can be stressful... but if you are a child of God... you don't have to reach for bottle... or pop a pill ... or anything like that.
- b. You can go to God... your Heavenly Father... and let your requests be made known to Him... and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- c. The church needs prayer warriors... you may not be able to sing... or teach... or lead... but anyone can pray and we need prayer warriors!
- d. If you are not a Christian... as long as you reject God's gift of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ... God will not hear your prayers.
- e. There is only one prayer that an unbeliever can pray that God has promised that He will hear... and that is a prayer of repentance and faith in Christ... once you are saved you can pray about everything.
- f. Dear God... thank You for loving me. I realize that I have failed You in many ways and I am truly sorry for the sin in my life. But I believe that You love me so much that you sent Your Son Jesus to die on the cross for me. I believe that Jesus took the punishment from You that I deserve for my sins. So right now I am trusting in what Jesus did for me to save me from my sins. I now surrender my life to Jesus and receive Him as my Savior and the Lord of my life. Thank you for forgiving me and help me to spend the rest of my life living for you and serving you. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.