

Sabbath Prayer Focus:

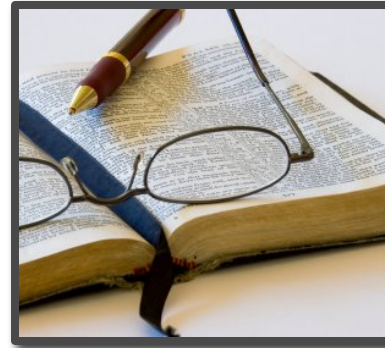
The church in Corinth, which struggled with so many issues, stood in need of instruction on the matter of spiritual gifts. Having brought into their Christian experience the same concepts they had held when they were “carried away” by “dumb idols” (1 Cor. 12:2), Paul had need to correct their misconceptions. They seemed to have also imagined that prayer could be some type of ecstatic experience, as the pagans had advanced, in which the suppliant communicated with a deity in unknown babblings. Paul suggests:

... For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also (1 Cor. 14:14,15a, KJV).

We notice in this text that Paul teaches that prayer must involve both the spirit and the mind. While Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit serves to clarify the unspoken need of the heart before God (Rom. 8:26), the child of God must not imagine that communication with God involves shutting off our minds. Nor should we think prayer in the spirit involves some unknown “prayer language” (as our Charismatic friends would have us to believe). In the simple statement - “I will pray...” we are reminded also that as a servant of God who is committed to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16) the apostle Paul maintains a deliberate and consistent commitment to go to God in prayer.

Prayer focus:

That we may study God's word and seek to perfect the divine science of prayer.

With the Spirit and the Understanding

Psalm 119:130 KJV

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

The Bible is a book which discloses the principles of right and truth. It contains whatever is needful for the saving of the soul, and at the same

time, it is adapted to strengthen and discipline the mind. If used as a text book in our schools, it will be found far more effective than any other book in the world, in guiding wisely in the affairs of this life, as well as in aiding the soul up the ladder of progress which reaches to heaven. God cares for us as intellectual beings, and he has given us his word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway. It is not the mere reading of the word that will accomplish the result that is designed by Heaven, but the truth revealed in the word of God must find an entrance into the heart, if the good intended is obtained. . . . Those who have grown and expanded, whose reasoning faculties have been improved by deep searching of the Scriptures, that they may know the will of God, will come into positions of usefulness; for the word of God has had an entrance into their life and character. It must do its peculiar work, even to the piercing asunder of the joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. E.G. White, Christian Education, p. 108

Prayer Marks Spiritual Leadership

Anglican cleric and Christian theologian John Wesley once wrote " give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

The Apostles knew the necessity and worth of prayer in their ministry. They knew that their high commission as apostles, instead of relieving them from the necessity of prayer, committed them to it by a more urgent need. Consequently, they were exceedingly careful that some other important work should not exhaust their time and prevent their praying as they should.

Prayer is one of the eminent characteristics of strong spiritual leadership. Leaders of mighty prayer are leaders of might and mold things. Their prayer with God has the conquering tread.

Prayer focus:

Pray for and with our leaders.

Adapted from: E.M. Bounds, *Prayer Marks Spiritual Leadership: The Classic Collection on Prayer*, pp. 639-641

Sabbath Prayer Focus:

Call On Me

Isaiah 43: 1, 10, 22

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. . . .Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.....But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

The Lord has said that his work is to be done, "not by might nor by power; but by my Spirit." The work of God is to be carried on to completion by the co-operation of divine and human agencies. Those who are self-sufficient may be apparently active in the work of God; but if they are prayerless, their activity is of no avail. . . . The church must pray in faith, else if the Lord grants success to our work, we shall be ensnared through spiritual pride. Sincere, earnest prayer will be answered. God has pledged his word that he will answer the cry of the honest heart.

Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald* July 4, 1893.



Kneeling in Prayer Teaches Reverence and Awe for God

May God teach His people how to pray. Let the teachers in our schools and the ministers in our churches, learn daily in the school of Christ. Then they will pray with earnestness, and their requests will be heard and answered. Then the word will be proclaimed with power.

Both in public and in private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before the Lord when we offer our petitions to Him. Jesus, our example, “kneeled down, and prayed.” Of His disciples it is recorded that they, too, “kneeled down, and prayed.” Paul declared in Ephesians 3:14, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In confessing before God the sins of Israel, Ezra knelt. Daniel “kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.”

True reverence for God [however, is not about our ability or inability to kneel, instead it] . . . is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed. The hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there; and as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened. “Holy and reverend is His name,” the psalmist declares, (Ps. 111:9). Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips!

Prayer focus:

For God's help in acquiring the true spirit of prayer and reverence for God.

The Kneeling Christian, by an Unknown Christian, p. 20

Sabbath Prayer Focus:

A Prayer of Humiliation and Contrition

Ezra 10:1

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.



Ezra had the true spirit of prayer. Presenting his petition before God for Israel, when they had sinned grievously in the face of great light and privileges, he exclaimed, “I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.” Ezra remembered the goodness of God in again giving his people a foothold in their native land, and he was overwhelmed with indignation and grief at the thought of their ingratitude in return for the divine favor. His language is that of true humiliation of soul, the contrition that prevails with God in prayer. Only the prayer of the humble enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1885.

The work of restoration and reform carried on by the returned exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days of this earth's history. . . . Heavy were the burdens borne by the leaders in this work; but these men moved forward in unwavering confidence, in humility of spirit, and in firm reliance upon God, believing that He would cause His truth to triumph. E.G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 667

50 Words

In 2 Chronicles 14 we read about King Asa, who "did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God." Verse 2. When Zerah the Ethiopian and his army came out against Israel, it did not take much to convince the king that he had 'no power.' His army was outnumbered and without much reflection he was able to say, 'We have no might.' So against impossible odds, where did King Asa look for help?

When we are overwhelmed by circumstances, and there seems no way out, what should we do? Where do we look for help?

King Asa prayed. It was not a long, winding prayer - just fifty sincere words that demonstrated his trust and reliance on God.

The world says, "be proactive, think win - win, begin with the end in mind and be the solution" but Jesus through the Psalmist says "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust." (Ps. 40:4) And Asa knew and trusted in the the Lord. He prayed, put the battle in the Lord's hands and left the result to Him.

Today, we too can choose to battle as King Asa did. Our Lord puts trust as the very foundation of praying. . . . Mountains of difficulties and all hinderances to prayer are moved out of the way by trust and its powerful helper - faith. When trust is perfect and without doubt, prayer is simply the outstretched hand expecting to receive. Trust perfected, is prayer perfected.

Prayer focus:

To develop a trusting prayer habit in the face of looming challenges.

Adapted: E.M. Bounds, *The Classic Collection on Prayer*, p. 60

Sabbath Prayer Focus:**A Leader's Prayer**

2 Chronicles 14:11

And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let no man prevail against thee.



The faith of Asa was put to a severe test when "Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots," invaded his kingdom. Verse 9. In this crisis Asa did not put his trust in the "fenced cities in Judah" that he had built, with "walls, and towers, gates, and bars," nor in the "mighty men of valor" in his carefully trained army. Verses 6-8. The king's trust was in Jehovah of hosts, in whose name marvelous deliverances had been wrought in behalf of Israel of old. Setting his forces in battle array, he sought the help of God.

The prayer of Asa is one that every Christian believer may fittingly offer. We fight in a warfare, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. See Ephesians 6:12. In life's conflict we must meet evil agencies that have arrayed themselves against the right. Our hope is not in man, but in the living God. With full assurance of faith we may expect that He will unite His omnipotence with the efforts of human instrumentalities, for the glory of His name. Clad with the armor of His righteousness, we may gain the victory over every foe. Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 110,111.

Sabbath Prayer Focus:

If God Be For Us

In every trial let us call upon the Lord, and he will save us. He shall hear us, and not blame us for coming too often; the oftener the more welcome. David had thought all were against him; but now he sees there were many with him, more than he supposed; and the glory of this he gives to God, for it is he that raises us up friends, and makes them faithful to us.

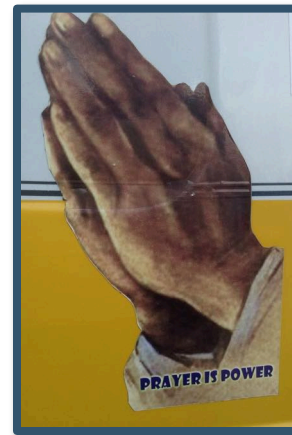
There are more true Christians, and believers have more real friends than in their gloomy hours they suppose (v.18). In Psalm 56:2, we hear the lament of David in distress. Again, he cries out to the Lord that his "enemies would daily swallow me up: for there be many that fight against me, O Thou Most High."

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by problems that seem to surround you like an invading army?

At one time or another we have all felt distressed and anxious by challenges we have had to face. Times of trouble that seemed like an army camped at our door, with nowhere to turn. But we remember David, who cried out to the Lord. We remember that we have Our Father's assurance that He will hear the cry of even the weakest suppliant and will answer.

Prayer focus:

Pray for the strength to seek God in prayer in every trial.

**Linked With God**

Psalm 55:17

Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

It is a wonderful thing that we can pray effectually; that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God. What higher power can man desire than this, to be linked with the infinite God?

Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to his Maker. We may utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. We may speak with Jesus as we walk by the way, and He says, I am at thy right hand.

We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. . . .

To every sincere prayer an answer will come. It may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need. The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, but always for your good. Ellen G. White, Prayer, p. 7.2