

Plugged In: High Voltage Prayer (Part 6)

Introduction:

We are powerless. We cannot win the fight in which we are engaged (**Ephesians 6:10-13**). We cannot overcome the enemy. We cannot accomplish the goals. However, God can. If we want to win, we have to plug in to His power, allowing His power to course through our lives. We have discovered prayer is the connector that sets us up as a conduit for God's power to work in this world. Prayer is the invitation for God to work in and through our lives. We must recognize, however, prayer is only half of the plugging in equation. It is an extremely important half and an often overlooked half, which is why we have devoted so much time to it. Nevertheless, it is only half. The other half of the plugging in equation is God's Word. Actually, it is not exactly accurate to describe prayer as half and God's Word as half, as though God's power will work in our lives halfway if we pray or halfway if we study. These two activities are dependent on each other. Without Bible study, prayer is useless; without prayer, Bible study is useless. However, when we combine the two activities, the dynamic power of God will explode in our lives and work. Again, we recall one of our key verses: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us..." (**Ephesians 3:20**). Examine with me five reasons prayer and Bible study are the dynamic duo.

Discussion:

I. The Whole Armor of God

- A. The foundation we laid for this series was wearing the whole armor of God. In our first lesson, we fully discussed prayer's place in our armor (**Ephesians 6:18**). Without prayer, we enter the battlefield with deadly gaps in our armor. However, we must recognize prayer is not the entirety of our armor. Interestingly, in the modern religious world there is a strong emphasis on prayer. More and more religious people around us are focusing on prayer. Yet, if we ride the pendulum of extremism to so focus on prayer that we neglect God's Word, we will enter the battlefield with just as many gaps in our armor as if we neglect prayer.
- B. Examine the armor described in **Ephesians 6:14-17**. We know the Word of God is described as our sword. We may be tempted to believe that is the extent of the role for God's Word in our battle. However, in reality, every piece of the armor is tied to the Word. Our loins are to be girt up with the truth that comes from God's Word (**John 17:17**). We must put on the breastplate of righteousness. The Word trains us in righteousness (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Where is this Gospel of peace but in the Word of God (**Colossians 1:5**)? Then we take up the shield of faith. Don't we already know our "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (**Romans 10:17**)? Finally, we put on the helmet of salvation, which we gain from obedience to the Word (**Acts 20:32; II Timothy 3:15**).
- C. If we want to be fully armed and ready for battle we must intermingle Bible study and prayer. If we neglect either, we are destined for failure, defeat and death. Put them together, however, and God's power will explode through us in the battle and we will stand victoriously with Him.

II. Praying in Faith.

- A. Anyone who has done any study on prayer has learned faith is fundamental to effective, fervent prayer. **Matthew 21:22** says, "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (ESV). That is a pretty blank check statement, which Jesus made without all the caveats we sometimes try to read into the text. **James 1:5-8; 5:15-19** also demonstrate the absolute necessity of faith for prayer to accomplish anything.
- B. Regrettably, however, when most of us discuss faith and prayer, we treat faith in a vacuum. We forget what faith is and from where it comes. Too often, all we say about faith and prayer is that we must pray believing that God can do what we ask and believing He will do what we ask. However, I know I have hit a major roadblock with that. How can I pray that God will do what I ask, when I know full well He may not and I have prepared myself to submit to His will when it is different from mine? I remember what faith really is, that is how. **Romans 10:17** says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (ESV). Faith does not believe God will do anything I ask. Faith believes God based on His revelation.

- C. The prayer offered in faith is not just some blind conviction God will do whatever I ask because I am convinced He must grant my request. The prayer offered in faith is founded in and grounded upon what God has said in His Word. Consider James' great example of Elijah in **James 5:17-18**. Elijah's was a prayer of faith, not because he decided it should stop raining and was just really, really, really convinced if he asked for the rain to stop, it would. Elijah's was a prayer of faith because it was predicated upon God's Word. In **Deuteronomy 11:17**, God had promised if Israel went into idolatry, He would stop the rain. Elijah had faith in God's promise and simply asked God to do what He promised. That is praying in faith.
- D. I cannot pray in faith...I cannot pray, believing, unless I have studied God's Word and know what He has promised. I can, however, pray believing God can do anything, will do what He has promised and will do good for His servants when my prayer is based on His Word.

III. Knowing God.

- A. Think for a moment about communication in general. Think about the conversations you have with people you know well, close friends, family members, etc. Now think about the conversations you have with strangers; check-out clerks, bank-tellers, and people on elevators. Is there a difference in those conversations? The better you know people the deeper your conversations. The better we know each other the more effective is our communication.
- B. Let's face it. God knows us. He created us. **Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16** demonstrates how intimately God knows us. The question is do we know God. The only way we will get to know God is through His Word. **I Corinthians 2:7-11** demonstrates we cannot know God, knowing what He thinks or what He desires, except He reveal it to us. The passage goes on to say that is exactly what He has done through the Holy Spirit. How did the Holy Spirit reveal God's mind to us? **II Peter 1:20-21** shows Scripture is the revelation of God's mind to man.
- C. Consider **Mark 12:24**. The Sadducees did not know God and they did not know His power, because they did not know His Word. If we want to know God, we must get into His Word. If we want our ability to communicate with God to deepen beyond vague generalities and courteous pleasantries, we have to get into His Word. Our ability to pray will deepen in direct proportion to our knowledge of God through His Word.

IV. Praying in Jesus' Name.

- A. Another amazing statement is found in **John 14:13-14**. For a long time, this verse scared me. I thought it offered more than I was willing to concede. I was afraid the "health and wealth" teachers might use this verse to propagate the idea that real prayer grants me anything I ask for. I "dealt with" this verse and those teachers by claiming, "This was said to the apostles." However, that approach really does not fix my problem. I have never believed Jesus gave a completely blank check to His apostles either saying, "Anything under the sun you might ever ask for I will give you." Notice what He said, "Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."
- B. Two keys about Jesus' statement on prayer. The request must be made in His name and it must be about accomplishing the Father's glory. Frankly, understanding that, I no longer believe this was a statement about the apostle's prayers but about any person's prayers. But what does it mean to offer a prayer in Jesus' name. It does not mean to simply end with the phrase, "In Jesus' name." **Acts 4:7, 9-10** demonstrates doing something in the name of Jesus, means doing it according to His power or according to what He has authorized. How do we know what Jesus has authorized or empowered us to do and to pray? We know from His revelation to us. **II Timothy 3:16-17** tells us scripture equips us, authorizes us for every good work. That means it authorizes us and empowers us for every good prayer. We cannot pray in Jesus' name unless our prayers coincide with Jesus equipping and empowering Word.
- C. Further, **John 15:5-8** corresponds with and is in the same context as **John 14:13-14**. Specifically note **vss. 7-8**, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (ESV). Here is the heart of the matter. Too often, we want prayer to accomplish what we want. Therefore, we use prayer to try to bend God to do our will. But prayer is the means by which we are bent to God's will. We will only get what we want in prayer when our lives have been transformed by God's Word causing Jesus to abide in us. Because then we will desire what Jesus desires and what we desire will glorify God. At that point, we will get anything and everything we ask for in prayer, because we will only be asking for what God wants and what glorifies Him. This is mature and effective prayer.

V. Prayer and Bible Study: Two-Way Communication.

- A. Typically, communication is a two way process. It includes give and take from both sides. Prayer is how we talk to God and we certainly want God to listen. But if we want God to listen to us, we must be willing to listen to Him. Have you ever had a conversation with somebody who will not let you get a word in edgewise? They may even ask you a question but not let you finish the answer. What do you think of those conversations? I doubt God likes that kind of communication from us either.
- B. Examine **Isaiah 66:1-5**. Pay careful attention to God's point to Israel. There were many Israelites offering up worship to God. They were entreating God for forgiveness by offering sacrifices of bulls and lambs. God said, however, that they might as well have been offering human and pig sacrifices (neither of which God would accept). Why? Because they were coming to the house of the Lord to "worship," but were leaving to do whatever they wanted. They wanted God to listen to them, but they refused to listen to God.
- C. However, God clearly states to whom He will listen. God listens to those who humbly hear His Word and tremble at His word, obeying it. Think about it. This is exactly what **I Peter 1:22-2:5** teaches. We were saved by obeying God's Word. If we want to continue in a relationship with Him, we must put off our own wickedness and desire God's Word. When we desire that Word as our food and nourishment, then we can offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise.
- D. We have to come to grips with this. If we will not listen to God through His Word, He will not listen to us through our prayers. Bible study and prayer must go together.

Conclusion:

Regrettably, it seems like religious people ride on extremes. There are some who act as though the only thing that really matters is that we study God's Word and obey it. There are others who act as though all that really matters is whether or not we submit to God in really heartfelt prayer. The truth is these two together are the dynamic duo. Only when we have both will we become the conduit for God's power to work in this world.