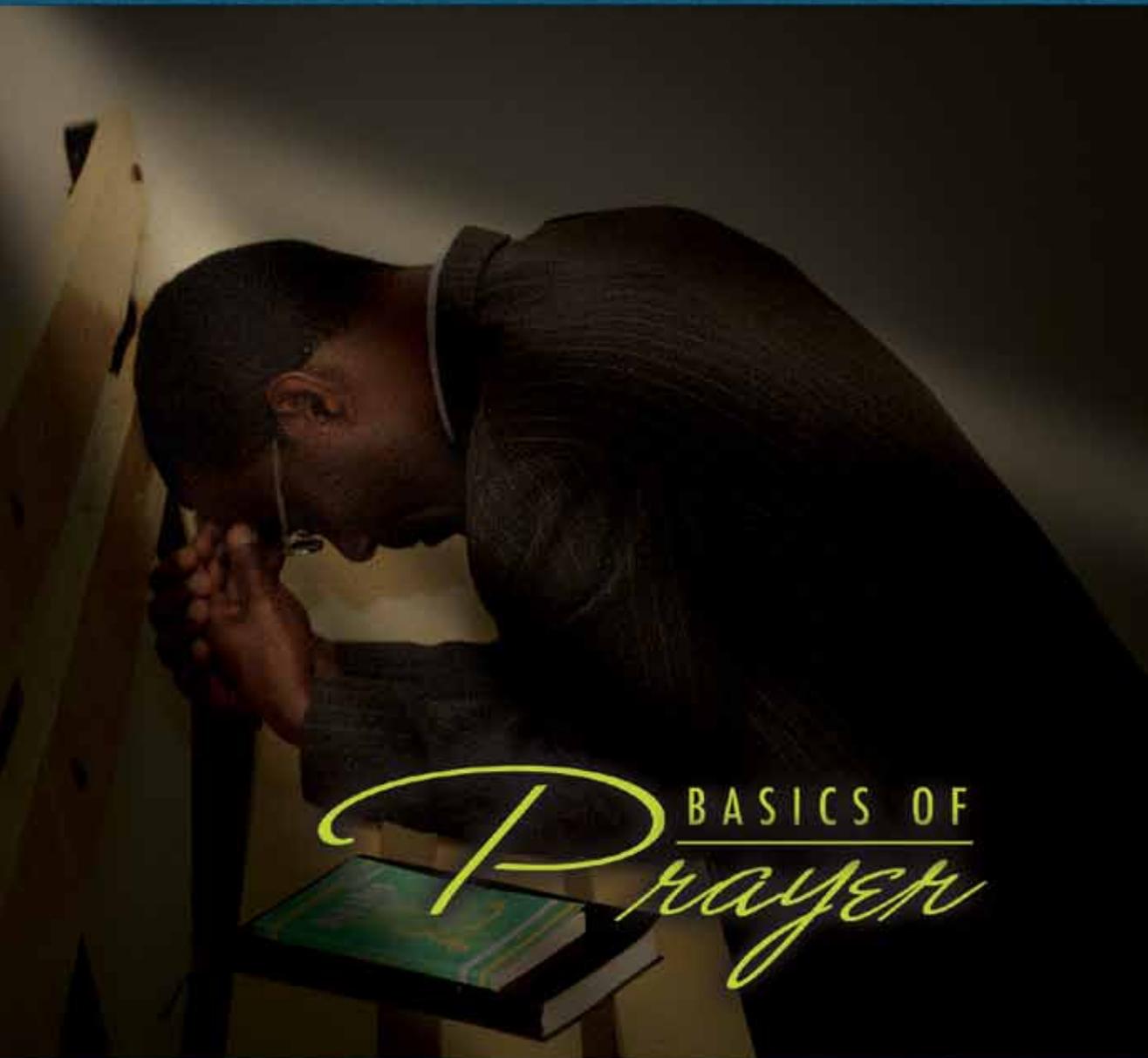
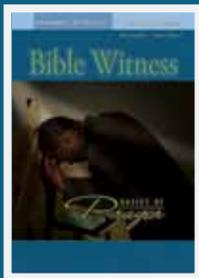


Bible Witness



P BASICS OF *Prayer*

Teach Me to Pray
Addressing God
In Jesus' Name
The Spirit's Help
The Bible & Prayer



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Teach Me to Pray

Timothy Tow



Let me ask you a question in the opening words of our hymn: “Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?” I have a strong suspicion many of you cannot say you have prayed. We belong to a rushing generation; it is so hard to find time. We are also a people who are too well off, so we do not see the need to pray. Now, let me ask you another question: “Do wives pray for their husbands and vice versa?” Also, we are not concerned for the salvation of our younger generation either. Do grandparents pray for their growing up grandchildren? Do parents teach their children to pray when they get up in the morning, when they go to bed at night and at mealtime - three times a day? King Solomon says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs

22:6). We are like little children, not knowing what to pray. Just like the disciple in Luke 11:1, we also plead, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

This Lord’s Prayer is composed of six petitions. The first three petitions are devoted particularly to the glory of God. The remaining three petitions concern ourselves.

The first petition: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” is that God’s name may be hallowed or revered. By this, we wish God to receive all the honour and glory that He deserves as opposed to the profanation (disrespect) that has become too common in the world.

The second petition: “Thy kingdom come” is that the kingdom of heaven may come. The kingdom consists of two parts: the one, God correcting all our

carnal desires; the other, His making all our powers to obey His commands. We are commanded to pray that He will subdue the hearts and minds of all men to a voluntary obedience to His kingdom.

The third petition: “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” is that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven. In praying for this, we renounce again our carnal desires in order that God may rule according to His pleasure. Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the LORD: and my glory will I not give to another.”

Now follows the next part of our prayer in which we descend to ourselves. It is the fourth petition: “Give us this day our daily bread.” This is a general request to God to supply our physical needs. The expression “this day” restrains the desire for more. We must realise what we have is not our own. We must learn that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4; cf. Deuteronomy 8:3). It teaches us to earn an honest living. In fact, God gives us plentifully and we must return one-tenth to Him, which is tithing. This we bring to God’s storehouse, the church. “And prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

The next and fifth petition is conditional: “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.” This is different from the Bible text which says “debts” because we were influenced by “trespasses” in the Common Prayer Book of the Anglican Church when Singapore was a British colony. Mission schools, like ACS, followed the Common Prayer Book. Here, Jesus further impresses

on us that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us either. So, how many times are we to forgive those who have hurt us? Peter asked the Lord, “Seven times?” Jesus said unto him, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven”, for that is how God deals with us (Matthew 18:21, 22).

But I have heard of a church member who being hurt by another, was fuming over it. “I will not forgive!” she shouted at her. She will not obtain forgiveness from God either. Even elders will not forgive one another in their hearts. How can God bless their ministry in church? The result is one of the two left the church and they have not made up to this day. Even pastors do not forgive. I remember two old pastors, the best of friends, who became the worst of enemies without any reconciliation until death.

The sixth petition is: “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” The forms of temptation are many. Satan is very cunning. He uses adverse and prosperous events at the same time to tempt us – prosperous events such as riches and power, and adverse events such as poverty and afflictions. Satan is the enemy and sin is his weapon. Our petition is that we may not be conquered by any temptations but in the power of the Lord, be superior to sin and the whole kingdom of Satan. This is deliverance from evil. Will we submit to God?

Whatever we seek from God is stated in the Lord’s Prayer. To overcome our weakness, we should appoint regular hours for prayer, such as when we rise up early in the morning before leaving our room.

Addressing God

Quek Suan Yew



How should we address one another? We should do so in an appropriate manner which befits each one's place in the society I cannot introduce myself as a knight and expect to be called "Sir" if in reality I have not been knighted. Conversely, I cannot ask to be called "Mister" if I am really a king sitting on the throne and conducting my kingly duties. There are certain protocols that must be adhered to in the day-to-day circumstances. In the courtroom, the judge is called "Your Honour". He might be my uncle

in actuality but I cannot call him "uncle" inside the courtroom. I must follow proper protocol. The point is that there is a right way and a wrong way to address someone and not in any way we like.

In the case of our Almighty God and in relation to our prayers to Him, we cannot address Him in any way we like. It is important that we address God in the manner which He has revealed Himself to us or rather the manner in which He has introduced Himself to His children

during occasions of prayer. The LORD Jesus Christ, when He was on earth in incarnate form, taught the disciples how to pray. Jesus said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9a). The phrase "after this manner" means "in this way" with reference to what follows. In this instance, it is the prayer taught by the Lord. The word "pray" means "to supplicate or make prayers". It is in the imperative, which is a command to pray in the manner prescribed. It is

written in the middle voice which means that the prayer must be done by oneself. No one can do it for him. In summary, Jesus is telling us the way He wants us to pray whenever we want to make supplications to God. It is a command, not an option, and is not to be taken lightly.

Jesus began by saying, “Our Father.” To call God “Father” was something very unusual even though God has introduced Himself as a father to Israel in Old Testament times. Below are some examples where God introduced Himself as a father to Israel:

Deuteronomy 32:6 – “Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?”

Psalms 89:26 – “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.”

Isaiah 63:16 – “Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.”

Isaiah 64:8 – “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”

Jeremiah 3:4 – “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?”

Jeremiah 3:19 – “But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.”

However, Matthew 6:9 was the first time that God’s people were expressly taught to address God as “Our Father” in prayer! The intimate relationship is reflected in the personal pronoun which is in the plural, emphasizing the fact that just as Christ addresses God as Father, so can we as God’s children. Christ will forever be God’s only begotten Son, and every believer is God’s adopted child. As God’s adopted children, we are given the privilege to address Him as our Father. Jesus added the phrase “which art in heaven” to emphasize that He is in heaven; we therefore must not approach Him callously or without the proper respect that will always be due to Him as God. Therefore, we can call Him “heavenly Father” or “our Father who is in heaven”.

The father-son relationship that God has purchased for us through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, must never be reduced to contempt. We do not call God “dad” even though we use this term of endearment to address our earthly father. Terms like “pops” and “old man” are disrespectful. We must not use them even though our earthly fathers do not mind. The awe and respect that a believer has for God must be present and observed at all times, and more so when we approach Him in prayer, i.e. make supplications. Is it correct to address God “Dear God”? It is not, because he is not our dear or darling. It is true that the word for “dear” is used to translate the Greek word “agape” in Colossians 1:13. The word means “precious” or “beloved” in the biblical usage. However, the problem is that today, the word “dear” has evolved into a different meaning and usage. It has become a conventional form of address that precedes a title or the name of a person. This change of usage has rendered



it inappropriate for believers to pray “Dear God”. Similarly, words like “conversation” and “bastard” have evolved throughout the ages and they have taken on different meanings in our era. The significance of the word “dear” is now lost. For the sake of not being misunderstood, it is best not to begin our prayers with “Dear God” but rather “Our heavenly Father” or “Our loving heavenly Father”. The reverence must be maintained whenever we address God. We ought to bear in mind that babes in Christ, especially the children, will observe and emulate how we pray. Thus, it is of utmost importance that parents and Sunday School teachers address God correctly, i.e. with reverence.

Even as God is our heavenly Father, we must never allow ourselves to commit the presumptuous sin of addressing Him with words that He has not revealed unto us about Himself. God Almighty must forever be reverentially approached

by God’s people. Whether on earth or in heaven, God as the supreme personal being is awesome and glorious. There are not enough adjectives to describe who He is but the respect and reverential fear that must be found in our relationship with Him must be seen in the way we address Him whenever we pray.

Prayer is a spiritual and holy endeavour that must not be downgraded to a mere dialogue between two persons. Believers are speaking with their Almighty God who has given them the privilege to call Him “Abba, Father”. However, we must never forget that our heavenly Father is in heaven and we are on earth, crying to Him for help.

Addressing God reverentially and correctly is essential in demonstrating genuine respect and awe.

In Jesus' Name

Quek Suan Yew



We do not approach God based upon who we are as His adopted children or what we have done in our service to Him. These are not sufficient grounds for us to approach God and to bring our supplications to Him. Some may cry to God desperately for help because their loved ones are grievously ill and they think that their intense sorrowing is sufficient to move God into action. But God's answers to prayer are based entirely upon a covenantal relationship and nothing else. For example, when Israel cried to the LORD in Exodus 2:23 because of the Egyptian bondage, the LORD heard them. Three different words were used to describe the cry of the Israelites, ranging from a general cry to a specific cry for help (Exodus 2:23) to an intense cry of distress (Exodus 3:7). "Their cry came up unto God by

reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:23b-24). The LORD made it abundantly clear in this revelation that He remembered Israel because of His covenant with the fathers, and He acted to relieve them of their sorrows. He sent Moses to be their deliverer. This was not the case with the Egyptians. After the LORD killed all their firstborn sons as recorded in Exodus 12:30, the Egyptians cried with a "great cry" of distress but the LORD neither comforted them nor attended to their cry for help. Compared with the Israelites' cry, theirs was "great". However, there was only complete silence from God.

The covenantal relationship also holds true in New Testament times. The covenantal relationship that has been

sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ when He died on the cross for our sins can move the arm of the Almighty God to help His children. Jesus Christ died for all the believers in both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament believers' faith was based upon what Jesus Christ would do in the future whereas the faith of New Testament believers was based upon what Christ had already done and fulfilled on the cross of Calvary. God's covenant from the moment Adam sinned against God has always been a covenant of salvation based upon Jesus Christ alone. There is no covenant of salvation based upon any other way of salvation. This is revealed in Romans 3:25 - "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." God the Father knew and saw the atoning work of Christ on Calvary as a fact that would surely take place, and based upon this, He exercised forbearance in granting man forgiveness and salvation.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that it is only through Christ and no one else that we can approach God. These two passages from the Gospel of John teach this truth very clearly. John 15:16 - "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." John 16:23-24 - "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Therefore, every prayer must be made only in Jesus' name, including the

prayer of salvation which must also be addressed to God the Father.

"In Jesus' name" is not a magic formula that anyone can use and be answered by God. When a believer prays and ends his prayers "in Jesus' name", he is saying to God that his prayers are uttered based entirely upon what Christ has done for him on the cross of Calvary. It is not just about what Christ has done on the cross for the whole world, but for him because he has accepted Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. Praying in Jesus' name means that the believer prays for God to hear him not for his sake nor what he has done, but only on what His only begotten Son has done for him. Can there be a stronger motivation to move the arm of Almighty God than the obedient finished work of Jesus Christ who came to do the Father's will? There can never be a better basis for a believer to approach God with his petitions or supplications.

We must not utter the phrase "in Jesus' name" perfunctorily like a full stop. It must be meaningfully said by every believer. Every believer, even the pastor, must never think of approaching God on his own merits but only on the merit of Christ. To do so is foolishness. No merit on this earth can be compared with the finished work of Christ! The name of Jesus Christ must not be uttered mindlessly or mechanically.

We must remember that the only basis for believers to approach God and be heard by Him is what Jesus Christ has done for them on the cross of Calvary. It is Christ's justification and sanctification that have made believers holy and righteous before God so that they can approach Him boldly and not be ashamed nor be a castaway.

The Spirit's Help

Quek Swan Yew



Romans 8:26-28 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

The context of Romans 8:26-28 is that of groaning for deliverance in the face of sufferings. Believers are stressed beyond measure and pressed to the point of giving in to temptation, and sin against God. The trials become so hard to bear. We know that we must pray but it is a great effort to pray as words are

insufficient. There are times in the midst of severe trials when we do not know how to pray because of the helplessness of our situation.

In times like these, the Holy Spirit helps us. The Greek word for “help” is a compound word which means “to take hold and come alongside”. The Holy Spirit takes hold of us and personally comes alongside us in times of our infirmities, i.e. weaknesses.

The Holy Spirit Himself will make intercession for us (on our behalf) continuously! This is not to imply that we can pray without thinking, or unbiblically, or in any way we like! This is a wrong understanding and a misapplication of God’s Word. It is imperative that we understand all the pitfalls of prayer as taught in the Holy

Scriptures and avoid wrong and sinful prayers! The knowledge that the Holy Spirit is helping us by praying for us when we find it hard to pray (at a loss for words) should encourage us to pray even more carefully, and not flippantly. We do not need to struggle in our prayers. The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, will help us, especially during the most critical times of our life!

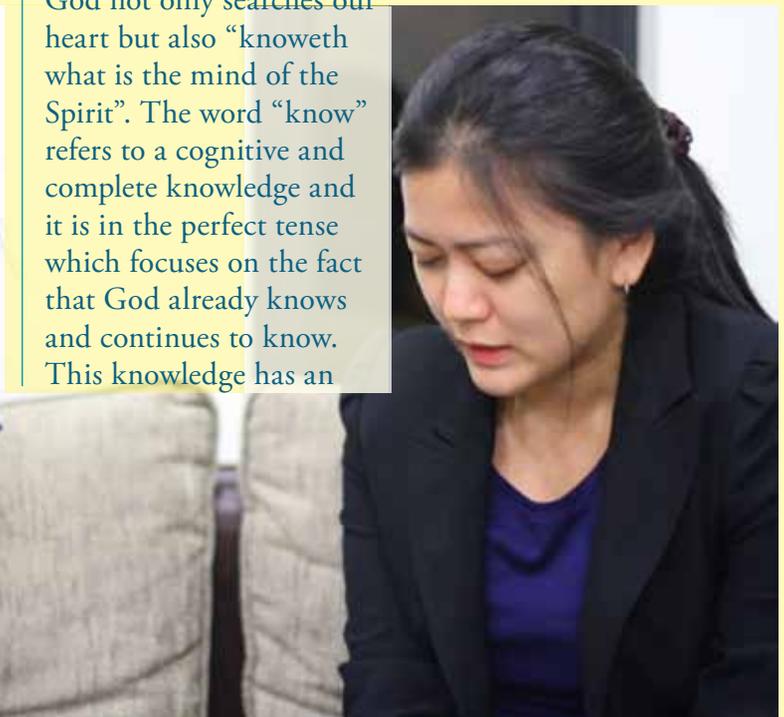
The Holy Spirit does so with groanings that cannot be uttered, i.e. words cannot express. It is not anything audible. It is definitely NOT the gibberish of the Charismatics today. The Charismatics speak

nonsense, possibly from a delusion of the mind or because it is self-induced. It could even be demonic!

In verse 27, referring to God, it says, “He that searcheth the hearts.” The word “search” refers to an investigation or examination. It is not a cursory one. It includes the search of the heart. The emphasis on the heart is to focus on the motive and thoughts of the believer whose soul is in turmoil as he struggles with what he ought to pray. God alone can make this kind of search. The present tense indicates a perpetual and continuous search. This is a perfect description of our God Almighty comforting us in our weakness.

God not only searches our heart but also “knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit”. The word “know” refers to a cognitive and complete knowledge and it is in the perfect tense which focuses on the fact that God already knows and continues to know. This knowledge has an

impact of action on His part. It is not passive but active knowledge. The emphasis here is not us but the Holy Spirit and the mind of the Spirit. The minds of the Holy Spirit and God are always in total and absolute agreement. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit intercedes on behalf of believers, all His intercessory prayers are always known fully by God and are fully answered. The Holy Spirit continually makes intercessory prayers for the saints. He always does so in accordance with the will of God. All believers can be assured that they are in very good hands, with the Holy Spirit praying for them as they go through all sorts of adversities on earth.



Based upon the fact that the Holy Spirit intercedes for all the saints continuously, God's children can say, as verse 28 says, that all things will surely work together for good to all those who love God and are doing God's holy and precious will. Thus the apostle Paul says that "we" know; not he alone, but every Christian knows. The emphasis here is cognitive knowledge that is based upon God's truth rather than the believer's own experience. Sometimes, the trial can be so painful and great that it is very difficult to recall and draw comfort from past experiences that God cares and all things will work out for our good. God's perfect Word is a more sure anchor for our soul and our unshakeable foundation in times of severe trials.

Paul did not say some things or most things but all things will work together for good. All things include blessings and adversities. We do not mind blessings but dislike adversities and try to avoid them. We know that trials are painful and not desirable. Paul did not say that trials alone will work out for good. All things "work together" for good but together with what?

It has to be together with God's grace and mercies. Trials alone do not bring about good to the saints. If mere trials bring about good, then this would also be true for unbelievers. Then all should just live a life of trials and avoid luxury and the comfortable life. We know that the external circumstances of the believer are independent of the spiritual well-being of his soul. A rich person can be very spiritual and close to God just like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, etc. Poor believers can also be very godly, for example, Paul himself. Thus this goodness that the Bible speaks of is spiritual. The believer grows to trust God and his faith in Christ deepens because of the trials he faces. This was the case with Job who said that before his trials he thought he knew God, but after the trials he testified that he had seen God (Job 42:5-6). The believer's experiential knowledge of God deepens and he walks closer to God. His prayer life becomes more consistent and intense. This is the goodness that the Bible speaks of.

The Bible describes the recipient of this goodness as one who loves God. The Bible does not stop at the

believer loving God. He is also called according to God's purpose. God directs the life of every believer. There is no exception. There is not one moment in the believer's life that does not fall in line with God's purpose! The child of God is constantly being directed by God. For the child who is doing the will of God in his life, all things could include being burned at the stake for Christ's sake, which would also come under the category of goodness. If this is the purpose of God for his life, then so be it! There are no accidents in the believer's life. Every virus, bacteria or trial that afflicts him has been allowed by the purposeful will of God. If the believer lives in the light of God's purpose for him, then his life will always turn out for good.

In times of great sufferings when we are not able to pray as we ought, the Holy Spirit is always there to make intercession for us as believers.

We have no need to fear, for all things will work together for good to those who love God and have been called according to His purpose. Amen.

The Bible & Prayer

Prabhudas Koshy



The Bible and prayer are closely bound together; they are two integral parts of Christian life and ministry. God communicates to His children by His Word, and they communicate to Him by prayer. Believers ‘inhale’ the words of God, and ‘exhale’ prayers unto God. So both the Bible and prayer are indispensable in maintaining a faithful and fruitful Christian life. While a lack of God’s Word and prayer will lead to spiritual calamities, an abundance of them will result in much spiritual success.

Our Lord Jesus had vividly stated the importance of God’s Word and prayer in John 15:7 – “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” A full measure of the Word and prayer each day will ensure a powerful and victorious Christian life.

Even for the ministry of the church, the Word of God and prayer are vital. Their indispensable place in the ministry has been affirmed by the apostles when they said, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer,

and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Christian ministry ought to be defined as the ministry of the Word and prayer. When Paul wrote about the ministry of Epaphras, a servant of Christ from Colosse, he reported about Epaphras “labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12).

Both the Word of God and prayer must be pursued with great enthusiasm. If prayer is pursued without the guidance of God’s Word, the result will be a mystic

religion. Conversely, much learning of the Bible without prayer will effect a mere mechanical, academic pursuit of the Scriptures without the beauty of faith, submission and the power of godliness.

The following biblical facts demonstrate to us the relationship that exists between the Bible and prayer.

The Bible is the basis of all prayer

All we need to know about prayer is found in the Bible. The infallible truths about God to whom we pray can only be found in the Bible (Hosea 4:1; Jeremiah 8:9; Matthew 22:29; John 5:39). The perfect knowledge of God, which the Bible provides, is vital to a proper, warm and effective prayer life (John 15:7; Psalm 119:58, 76, 170). Scripture shows that those who are mighty in prayer are those who know God intimately through His Word.

Prayers ought to be consistent with God's truth in the Bible. Prayers which are contrary to the Word will not be answered by God. Acceptable prayers flow out of the sound

doctrines of the Bible. In fact, it is warned that the prayers of those who are disinterested in the Bible are an abomination to the Lord. Proverbs 28:9 tells us, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

The Bible is the manual for prayer

Not only does the Bible direct Christians to pray, it also provides the divine principles and patterns of prayers that are acceptable to God. The principles of prayer are taught both by direct commands and through prayers of godly men, which are a pattern for all those who delight in coming to God in prayer.

It teaches us various kinds of prayer such as petitions (1 John 5:15), supplications (1 Timothy 2:1; 5:5),

intercessions (1 Timothy 2:1), thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2) and confession (Daniel 9:20; Psalm 51).

The Bible is the corrective aid for improper prayer

Reasons for unanswered prayers are clearly taught in Scripture so that Christians may correct their errors and enjoy an effective prayer life. It admonishes us against sin harboured in one's heart (Psalm 66:17): whether it be lack of mercy (Proverbs 21:13); hatred and violence (Isaiah 1:15); greed and lust (James 4:3); an unforgiving spirit (Matthew 5:23-24); marital infidelity (1 Peter 3:7); hypocrisy (Matthew 6:5-6); vain repetition (Matthew 6:7-8) or doubt (1 Timothy 2:8).





The Bible provides motivation for a life of prayer

The Bible excites us to a life of prayer with wonderful promises of God's answers to our prayers. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3; cf. Psalms 50:15; 91:15; 145:18; Matthew 6:6; 7:7-11; 21:22; Mark 11:24; 1 John 3:20-22).

We are also given examples of lives blessed through prayers, e.g. that of Moses, Hannah, Samuel, David, Esther and Paul. In the Bible, the greatest of all men of prayer is the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 14:23, 26:36; Luke 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1). If we would truly claim Him as Lord and Master, we also ought to yield ourselves to be like Him in our exercise of prayer.

The Bible should be the main subject of our prayer

We ought to pray for an understanding of the Word of God (see Psalm 119:18, 34; Ephesians

1:17-23). When we learn the truths of the Bible, we must rejoice and turn to God in prayer to give thanks (Psalm 119:7, 164, 171, 175). We are to seek God's blessings that are promised in the Bible (Acts 2:39; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Psalm 119:173; 2 Chronicles 1:9). We are to study the instructions and exhortations of the Bible and pray that they will be fulfilled in our lives (Psalm 119:5, 35-36; Hebrews 13:21). Upon the study of the Word, we ought to pray "Lord, may Thy will be done in me."

The Bible's promulgation ought to be a subject of our prayer

It is every Christian's God-given duty to pray for the propagation of His Word. In this regard, Christians are also instructed to pray for those who preach the

Word. Paul urged his first readers in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." To the Colossians, Paul wrote, "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Colossians 4:3).

Conclusion

A constant study of the Bible is essential for the nurture of our prayer life (Luke 11:1-13; Jude 20), and a consistent prayer life is essential for the right understanding of and obedient response to the Bible (Psalms 25:4-5; 86:11; 119:12, 26, 33-35, 64, 66, 68, 124, 135, 169; 143:10; Colossians 1:9-10).

A biblical prayer life is most necessary for a closer walk with God.

Facts About Prayer

Prabhudas Koshy



In these days, prayer in the Christian realm is increasingly putting on the characteristics of unbiblical mysticism of the oriental religions. Prayers of Christians ought to be guided and moulded by biblical injunctions and patterns of prayer. The following characteristics of biblical prayer can be of help to maintain proper prayer habits.

Prayer should always be Godward

Prayer is unidirectional – believers speaking to God and Him alone. Philippians 4:6 says, “Let your requests be made known unto God” (cf. Nehemiah 4:9; Acts 12:5). Jesus said, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10). Never does the Bible speak of prayer as a request made to dead saints, angels or demons. In truth, the Bible prohibits any form of prayer to idols, spirits of the dead persons and devils (Deuteronomy 18:9-13; Leviticus 9:31; 20:6; 2 Kings 17:17; Psalm 115:4-8; Zechariah 10:2). No man, whether dead or alive, is worthy of our dependence. “It

is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Psalm 118:8). “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah” (Psalm 62:8).

Unfortunately, there are many who claim to be Christians but practise necromancy (praying to the dead) and other forms of prayer and worship that are abominable to God. It is not uncommon nowadays to hear some charismatic preachers talking to the devil in the midst of their prayers. These practices, biblically-speaking, are distortions of prayer. Prayer should only be rendered unto God.

Prayer provides immediate access to God

To all true Christians, prayer means instant access to God. Paul affirmed this truth in Ephesians 2:18 – “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (cf. Romans 5:2). Likewise, Hebrews 4:16 declares, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Christians can have boldness in the fact that they can have access to God’s gracious throne any time they need His help.

All those who have been reconciled to God through Christ can have the

assurance that God is ever ready to hear their prayers. In fact, because God is omnipresent (God is everywhere regardless of time or circumstances) and omniscient (God is all-knowing), He not only hears prayer immediately but even knows the content of prayer before it is formulated by the one praying. Isaiah 65:24 says, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” Psalm 145:18 promises, “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth” (cf. Psalms 50:15; 91:15).

Prayer is independent of ritualistic posture and activities

The Bible records God’s people praying in various physical positions. Praying in various circumstances necessitates different postures. In the Bible, people prayed standing (Genesis. 24:12-14), lifting up their hands (1 Timothy 2:8), sitting (Judges 20:26, 2 Samuel 7:18), kneeling (Daniel 6:10; Mark 1:40), looking upward (John 17:1), bowing down (Exodus 34:8), placing their heads between their knees (1 Kings 18:42), lying down on their bed (Psalms 4:4; 63:6), bowing on their bed (1 Kings 1:47), pounding on their breasts (Luke 18:13), facing the temple (Daniel 6:10), and prostrating (Mark 14:35; Revelation 7:11).

The above brief review indicates that in the Bible, there is not a particular posture of prayer. Postures are important only to the extent that they are the external expression of reverence, inner feelings and commitment to the Lord. No single posture is able to express all feelings of the praying man. Hence, we find in Scripture

a diversity of options and possibilities. One should adopt his posture of prayer in a reverential manner. Our posture in prayer should be the reflection of our hearts, whether it be hearts overwhelmed with the cares of life, hearts overawed by the majesty of God or hearts hushed in humble obedience to God.

Above all, the Bible emphasizes the posture of the heart more than the external posture. Isaiah 29:13 admonishes us: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.” Jesus also warned against the hypocritical prayer postures – “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:5).

Prayer can be offered anywhere

We are not required to be in a church building or a sacred place in order to pray to God. (Of course, this fact should not be cited as an excuse for forsaking church prayer meetings and worship services.) The Bible records people praying in all sorts of places: in a closet (Matthew 6:6), before the congregation (2 Chronicles 6:13), as a church (Acts 2:42-47), in a garden (Matthew 26:36-44), on a mountainside (Luke 6:12), in a home (Acts 9:39-40), by a river (Acts 16:13), on the shore (Acts 21:5-6), while sinking in

the sea (Matthew 14:30), on the way by the well (Genesis 24:11-27), in the temple (1 Kings 8:22-53), in battle (2 Chronicles 13:14-15), in a cave (1 Kings 19:9-10), in bed (Psalm 4:3-4), in the stomach of a fish (Jonah 2:1-10), on a housetop (Acts 10:9), in a prison (Acts 16:23-26), in the wilderness (Luke 5:16) and on a cross (Luke 23:33-34, 46).

In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere." For the Spirit-filled Christian, every place becomes a place of prayer.

Prayer can be offered any time

A believer is always aware of his insufficiency and therefore the need to live in total dependence on God at all times. The Bible records the testimony of those who cried unto God day and night (Psalm 88:1; Luke 2:37; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:3). Everyone who humbly accepts his insufficiency and dependence on God will be eager to pray always. So Jesus exhorted:

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

Scripture records people praying three times a day (Daniel 6:10), in the morning (Psalm 5:3), in the evening (1 Kings 18:36), before meals (Matthew 14:19), after meals (Deuteronomy 8:10), at the ninth hour (Acts 3:1), at bedtime (Psalm 4:4), at midnight (Acts 16:25), day and night

(Luke 2:37; 18:7), often (Luke 5:33), when they are young (Jeremiah 3:4), when they are old (Daniel 9:2-19), when they are in trouble (2 Kings 19:3-4), every day (Psalm 86:3), and always (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).



Prayer has no language barrier

Prayer has no language barrier. Even though man thinks and speaks in different languages, God understands all of them. He is the God of all nations and Scripture says, “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name” (Psalm 86:9). This certainly



gives evidence to the fact that language is no barrier when it comes to praying to God (Acts 2:4, 11; Acts 10:46). God even searches the hearts of His children and thereby knows their motives, needs and desires, no matter what language they think or speak in (Romans 8:27).

Prayer can be presented to God in various forms

Since God knows both the hearts and thoughts of everyone, prayer may be expressed mentally, audibly or in song (psalms). In times of great trials, we may prayerfully sit before His throne though without the power to express our thoughts. In times like these, the Holy Spirit searches our hearts and makes our feelings and thoughts known unto God (Romans 8:26; Hebrews 4:15).

There is a time for offering up our prayers in a proper, clear and formal manner.

This should be the case, especially when we pray before a congregation or fellowship group.

However, we can come before God with broken hearts and weeping, crying audibly (1 Samuel 1:10; Psalm 34:18). At times, it may be expressed in the form of making a vow (1 Samuel 1:11; Acts 18:18),



making sacrifices (Psalm 20:1-3) and singing songs (Psalm 59:16, 17; Acts 16:25).

People in the Bible prayed sitting in ashes (Job 1:20-21; 2:8), wearing sackcloth (Psalm 35:13), crying with tears (Psalm 6:6), smiting their breasts (Luke 18:13), throwing dust on their heads (Joshua 7:6), tearing garments (1 Kings 21:27), fasting (Deuteronomy 9:18), sighing (Ezra 9:4-15), groaning (Psalm 6:4-6), crying out loud (Hebrews 5:7) and sweating as if bleeding (Luke 22:44).

Sometimes, Christians may engage in prayer for several days (Esther 4:16), several hours – all through the night (Luke 6:12), or short ejaculatory prayers (Matthew 14:30). Some

would even take time to pray several times a day (Daniel 6:10).

Conclusion

Prayer is to be a total way of life—an open and continual communion with God. It is not limited or restrained by factors such

as time, posture and place. Under any circumstance, a child of God can call on His God.

Daniel's Prayer

Hien Nguyen



Communion with God in prayer was a great part of Daniel's spiritual life and blessings, and it was so vital and precious that Daniel would rather be cast into the lions' den than stop his communion with God – "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel 6:10). All of his good spiritual

qualities must have come from the LORD, whom he humbly sought after, trusted in and cried unto in prayers. Daniel also asked his three friends to pray with him, crying to the Lord for mercies and wisdom (cf. Daniel 2:18). Daniel recorded his long prayer to God in chapter 9, verses 1-23, from which we can draw some spiritual lessons.

Pray with faith in God's Word and promises

"Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (9:2). Daniel totally believed in God's Word recorded by Jeremiah without any doubt or question, and his prayer to God was based on God's Word

and promises. God hears our prayers "if we ask any thing according to his will" (1 John 5:14), and without reading and believing His Word, we can never know God's will. Sadly, many nowadays doubt God's Word recorded by His servants, and this doubt only prevents them from receiving God's blessings. How about you and me?

Humbly, seriously and earnestly seek God in prayer

“I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (9:3). God rejected the prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee but heard the humble cry of the sinner for mercy (Luke 18:13). How about you and me?

Praise God in reverent worship

“O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments” (9:4). When we come to God, we should ascribe praise to Him; and also remember His instruction: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

Confess our sins

“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments” (9:5; cf. vv. 6, 20). Daniel did not proudly say, “O God, these people are sinful but I am not like them. I am faithful to Thee unto death.” Daniel used the plural pronoun “we” to identify himself with his people. Our Lord Jesus teaches us to confess our sins in our prayers (Matthew 6:12). Truly, “he that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).



Acknowledge our deserved punishment as God's justice

“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion (shame) of faces... because we have sinned against thee” (9:7-8), and “he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us... all this evil is come upon us... for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice” (9:12-14). Many just complain and blame God for all their sufferings, trials or troubles but they fail to see their sins, and God’s righteousness. How about you and me?

Cry for God's mercies

“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses... we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies” (9:9, 18). The tax collector cried for God’s mercy and his prayer was heard. You and I have to do the same.

Pray to God for His sake and His name's sake

“Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake... O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (9:17, 19). Daniel did not cry unto the LORD for his own benefits based on his merits or goodness but asked God to remember His people and His city, Jerusalem, for His sake and His name’s sake. How do you and I pray to the Lord?

Conclusion

With such proper attitudes, Daniel was greatly beloved of the Lord who said to him, “for thou art greatly beloved” (9:23; cf. 10:11, 19), and the Lord revealed His plan to Daniel, which has been fulfilled and will be fulfilled in the end times.

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GBI is established (i) to equip laymen with sound doctrines of God's Word, and (ii) to provide biblical training to those who are called to be full-time pastors, preachers and missionaries.

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BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 5 & 6

Sarah Yong

READ THE PASSAGE FROM YOUR BIBLE AND DECIDE IF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE. THEN CIRCLE THE LETTER IN THE CORRECT COLUMN.

Statement	True	False
1. The king of Egypt did not allow God's people to leave.	J	T
2. Pharaoh increased the burden of the people by commanding them to gather bricks.	A	E
3. The officers of the children of Israel complained to Moses and his brother about their suffering.	H	O
4. Moses sought the LORD and he was reminded that God Almighty would remember His covenant.	O	P
5. God promised to remove the bondage of the people and bring them to the promised land of Cannon.	U	V
6. Aaron and Moses were descendants of the tribe of Reuben.	S	A
7. Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Phinehas.	B	H

Spiritual Lesson

Write the circled letters on the blanks below to form a name of God.

— — — — —

This personal name tells us that God is self-existent and the only eternal God and Saviour. He is the Creator, the source of everything, without beginning and without end. Moreover, He is the unchanging and ever faithful God who keeps His covenant forever. He remembered the covenant that He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus He sent Moses to deliver the Jews from Egypt. He remembers and keeps all the promises He gives to us in the Bible too!

Answers to Volume 12, Issue 2 – Bible Trivia – Exodus 4

p. 24 - Voice, ground, serpent, hand, snow, river, blood, Moses, tongue, teach, brother, returned, elders, Israel, sight

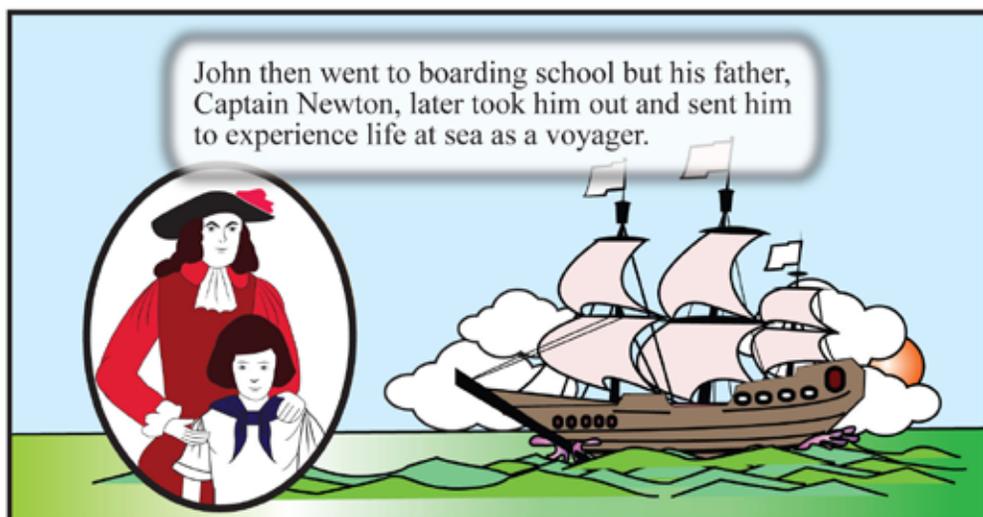
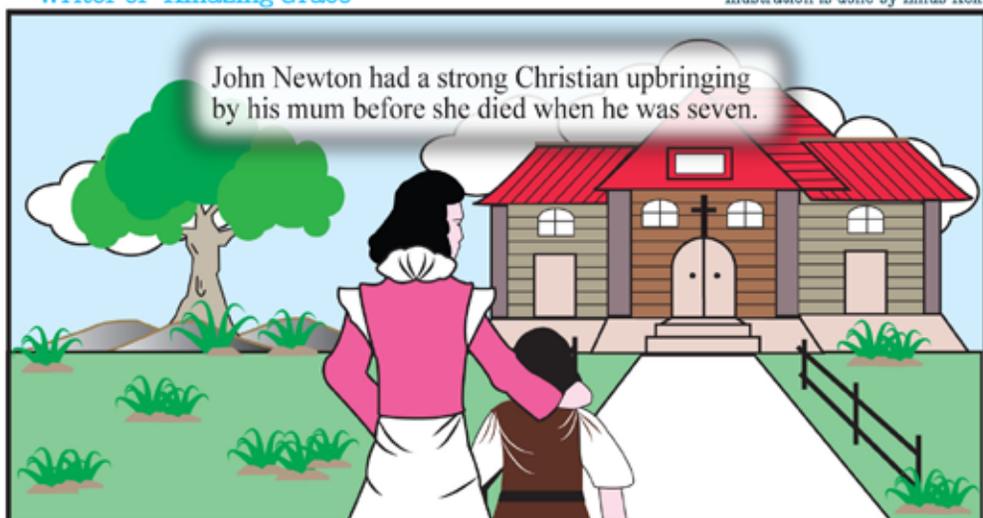
Spiritual Lesson

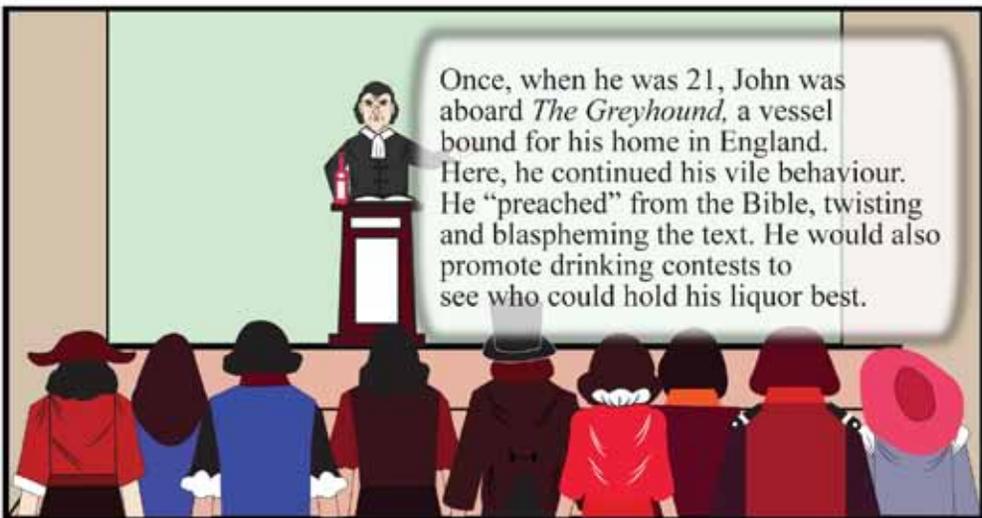
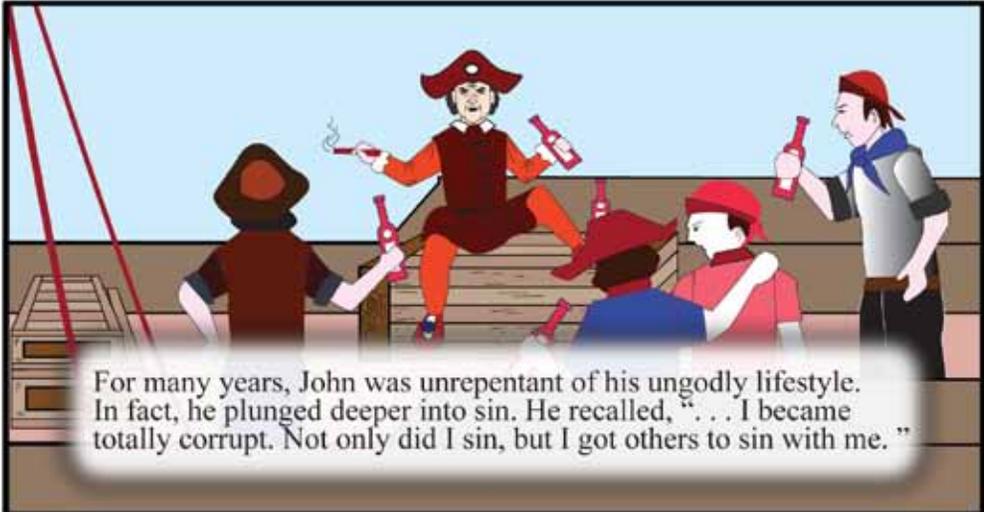
Psalm 32:8 – "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

John Newton

Writer of "Amazing Grace"

Bibliography: "Men of Destiny" by Peter Masters
The story is retold by Ruth Low.
Illustration is done by Linus Kok.

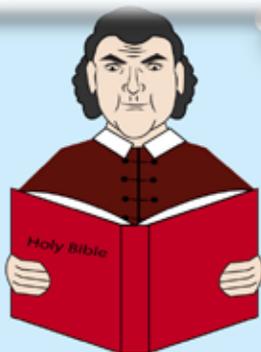




In his terror and desperation, John asked himself, "Is there a God?" "Is there life after death?" He feared to die and meet his Maker whom he had insulted for so long.



Scripture passages which he read years before flashed through his mind. He thought about Christ who died for the sins of man, and prayed desperately for help and safety. By God's mercy, the storm subsided at daybreak though the ship remained unseaworthy.



After the nightmarish experience, John wondered how God could forgive such a sinner like him. Seizing a Bible, he read about the conversion of Saul who hated Christ and also the father of the prodigal son who ran to welcome him home. God could indeed forgive the vilest sinner!

After four weeks, *The Greyhound* finally came safely to shore, the seamen being terribly exhausted, hungry and weak. However, John emerged a new man - much humbled. He wrote: "About that time, I began to know that there is a God who hears and answers prayer. I felt a peace and satisfaction on that day which I had never known before."



Not long after, John began to preach the good news of salvation to others with vigour and urgency till he was past eighty years of age — John was one of the greatest preachers of his day. Together with poet William Cowper, John also

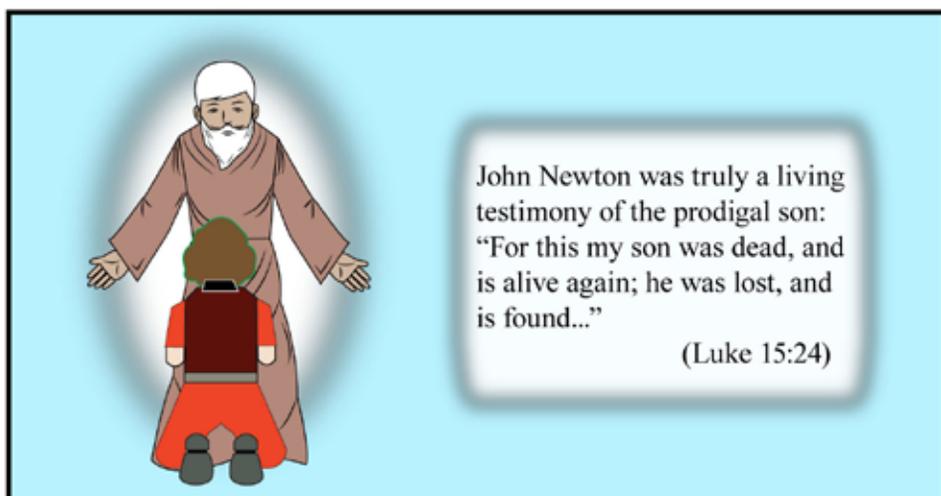


John Newton



William Cowper

compiled a hymn book — *The Olney Hymn Book* — from which scores of hymns are still in use today. Familiar ones include *Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken* and *Amazing Grace*.



John Newton was truly a living testimony of the prodigal son: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found..."

(Luke 15:24)

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