

The School of Prayer - Part 1

by Walter Beuttler

Walter Beuttler's sermon emphasizes the vital role of sincere prayer in ministry and personal faith, contrasting it with hypocritical and mechanical approaches to prayer.

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:19, Matthew 6:5, Matthew 6:7-8, Luke 11:1

Topics: "Prayer Ministry", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Walter Beuttler reflects on the importance of prayer in the ministry, emphasizing that God does not always choose from theological schools but can raise His own men and women from unexpected places. He highlights the need for prayerfulness in the ministry, sharing personal experiences and insights on waiting on the Lord and the power of prayer. Beuttler delves into the Lord's School of Prayer, urging believers to prioritize prayer and seek God earnestly, drawing from biblical teachings on prayer and the examples set by Jesus.

Transcript

In the Old Testament, there were at least three Bible schools (we call them that) in existence. They were called the school of the prophets. There was one at Gilgal, one at Bethel, and one in Jericho. Jericho Bible College apparently had 50 students enrolled.

I have been teaching Old Testament for many years, and one year as I was meditating on my ministry, something struck me, which has never left me. When God needed a successor to Elijah, He did not go to the Bible School at Gilgal, or at Bethel, or at Jericho to find a successor to Elijah. If the Lord went to Gilgal, He was not satisfied with anyone for what He needed. If He went to Bethel, He did not choose anyone. If He went to the President of the Jericho Bible College for a possible successor, He did not choose one.

And then God went out to the plow. Whether God considered these schools, I do not know, but we do know that God needed a man, a man of the Spirit, a man whom God could clothe with His mantle; not a ministerial robe, but a robe of the power of God. God chose that man from behind the plow.

What struck me was this: When God cannot find what He needs, He is under no obligation to use any graduate of any Bible school just because they have a diploma. If He cannot find in our theological schools what He needs for His work, He is not obligated to use any of us. He still can go out to the plow, to the workshop, to the know-nothings and have-nothings, and raise up His own men and His own women.

I think that the religious organizations ought to think of this. I am not saying that only here, but I have said it elsewhere in high places. I said it in Manila to a large convention of missionaries from all over the Pacific.

This brings me to the burden of our subject, the Lord's School of Prayer. May I suggest that my observation has been that prayerlessness is becoming an increasing malaise in the ministry. The prayerlessness in the ministry is often astounding. Even on the mission field, I have been astonished at the little regard for prayer and waiting on God.

But if I understand the Lord's practice right, and His teaching, and that of the apostles, then prayer ought to be one of our most important components in the ministry. Paul spoke about prayer, that we might continually give ourselves to prayer. How much the Lord taught His disciples on prayer. I know that I cannot exist without prayer, without waiting on God. In fact, I am jealously guarding my own times of having an opportunity for waiting on the Lord.

I was in Melbourne, Australia one year for a week. The leader said, "Brother Beuttler, how about coming back to our Christmas camp?" Camp down there is from Christmas Day to New Year.

I said, "Well, as far as scheduling is concerned, we have a school vacation. I could come, but Melbourne is a long ways from Green Lane." He said, "I know what you mean. You are thinking of the cost." I said, "Of course, I would have to."

He said, "If I am asking you to come, I will pay your fare. How much is it?" I said, "It is about \$1,450.00." He said, "That is all right. Are you coming?" "Yes," I said, "I can come."

He said, "I am also bringing over a man from Springfield." This man was then the General Secretary of the Assemblies of God. He was to be the evangelist and I had the ministers' seminar in the morning Bible study. I said to him, "Brother, if you are going to bring both of us over, will you please not put us on the same flight."

He said, "You mean, you do not want to ride with a man from Springfield?" That sounds bad, doesn't it? I said, "That is what I mean." Then fearing that he would misunderstand, I said, "Do you know what I mean?" He said, "I think I do. What you want is to be alone on your trans-Pacific flight so you can spend your time with the Lord. I figured that out from your teaching this week."

I said, "That is the reason." You know some people, and preachers too; they chew your ears off. They have nothing to say and insist on saying it... and take hours to do it. There you are losing precious time.

"When people pay \$1,450 for a ticket for one week of ministry, they are entitled to get something." Therefore, I wanted to take my time, hour after hour, sitting in the Lord's Presence waiting on the Lord, so when I get there, I would have something to say from the heart of God. To me, such times are indispensable. I have to make room for that.

We need to make room for times of prayer, seeking God, waiting on God, even though I well know there is such a thing as the devotions of our heart continuing even as we are engaged in other types of work. That is possible, but that is not our subject, so let us turn for a moment to Luke 11:1:

"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Notice something here: Jesus was praying "in a certain place." The place is not identified. I do not suppose it needs to be, but the Lord was in a certain place. I do not know whether this was His habitual place, but the fact remains there are times when we need a place to pray.

When I am home, I have my study, and I do not like people to come and barge in. This is my little sanctum and very few people are ever invited in there. That is where I have my devotion with God when I am home. Of course, when you are traveling, then an airport terminal, a hotel lobby or a 747 flight can become your place.

Jesus was habitual in seeking out a place to pray. "As He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased." Incidentally, the Lord apparently knew when to stop. Some people do not. Have you ever heard people pray and you think they will never stop?

I was in Italy down in Sicily. We had dinner, and the family had 5 children. At dinnertime, everybody had to kneel. The food was sitting on the table, and if I hate anything, it is hot food cold and hot coffee cold.

You might just as well keep it. I do not want it when it is cold. Here was the hot food. We all had to kneel. Each one had to pray out loud. The father came last. I think he must have prayed for half an hour, all around the world. He included everything and everybody. By the time we sat down to eat, obviously, it was cold. I had to eat it, but I would have preferred to do without. I thought that man would never stop. Well, Jesus ceased.

One of His disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray." This to me is remarkable. What was there about the prayer of Jesus that caused this disciple to say, "Lord, teach us to pray?" I do not know who the disciple was. I have studied it out, but I cannot find it. I suppose it is really immaterial, but why did this disciple say this?

I do not know if the Lord prayed audibly. Personally, I think He did. It would seem that if the Lord had not done so, this disciple would hardly have said, "Lord, teach us to pray." He would have had no basis for saying that, so I rather think that the Lord was praying audibly. You know there is something to audible praying that you do not get in silent prayer normally, and the reverse is also true.

Our devotional life must not consist merely of silent devotion. If we avoid the audible prayer, you will likely find our silent devotion will get to be a mystical stew of some kind. There needs to be a counter balance to audible praying; and audible praying needs the counter balance of silent praying, a silent waiting on God, lest it become too formal.

The Lord must have prayed, audibly. First of all, assuming that that is so, I would say that the Lord's prayer created a desire in this disciple's heart to pray as the Lord prayed. Apparently men need to be taught how to pray. We need to be taught not only how to pray, but to pray. Some people know how to pray, but do not pray. Some people pray and do not know how to pray. We need to know how to pray, aright, effectively.

Apparently man, in his natural state, does not know how to pray, how to approach God effectively. Obviously, the Lord's prayer, created a desire in this disciple's heart to pray as the Lord prayed. I assume he meant with the same earnestness, the same quality, the same understanding. This disciple had a desire born in his heart to pray when he heard the Lord pray.

This raises a question in my heart. How many people wish, or have a desire created in their heart by my praying? Now in public, I am a very silent man. I do not sing much. I do not pray much, the reason being: I have a problem here with energy. I have an energy problem physically. I wear down, so I have to conserve energy. That is why I leave a meeting right away, why I do not participate in it. I participate all right, but not with my voice because I have to save my energy.

Years ago, I was saved in Glad Tidings Tabernacle. I walked in because I wanted a place to sit, and there was no place to sit in New York. There was the church and I decided, "I will go and sit in the back. At least I will have a place to sit." I was not interested, so I do not know what happened.

At the end of the service, the lady evangelist, a Miss Aires - some of you old timers might remember her, said, "If anyone needs Jesus, please raise your hand." I do not know what happened to me, but my hand went up. All I was there for, was to sit down someplace. I had become tired walking the streets.

There was no one else. She said, "Young man, will you please stand to your feet." That, I did not expect. Well, I stood. "Young man, will you please come up to this altar and kneel down." Was I embarrassed, as I am easily embarrassed anyhow.

As I walked up and knelt down, I was quivering and shaking. She said, "You young people, will you just gather around this young man and we will all have a prayer meeting and worship the Lord."

The young fellows were asked to go on this side. The girls were asked to go on that side of the platform, turned at an angle like this. Well, I did not know what to do there, so I did some watching. Over here was a little blond girl. I still remember her blond hair rolling down her back, down to her shoulder, and I kept watching her.

I had no romantic ideas, not at that moment. Then I prayed my first prayer ever. I said, "O God, I wish I could pray like that girl." No sooner had I said this in my heart only, the power of God struck me (I knew nothing about this), lifted me bodily off the floor completely (I was on my knees), and I went up and down rapidly like the pistons of an engine, just like this, and was thrown over like a bolt of lightning had struck me. There I lay prostrate under the power.

Robert Brown lifted me up at 12:30 that night. I was staggering like a drunk. He said, "Brother, whoever you are, God has done a great thing for you tonight." And I staggered out like a drunk. I was out on the steps of Glad Tidings Tabernacle close to 1:00 o'clock at night, something like that. I shouted down 33rd Street, "Hallelujah!"

Now that was not appropriate, but as a newborn baby, it was appropriate.

I went up to the elevator train to go back to my little skylight room at 69th Street. The theater people had been coming home from the theaters. The car was crowded. I walked in and stood at the end and shouted, "Praise the Lord! I got saved tonight." They looked as though they saw a maniac, but it was real.

And yet, that girl's prayer (and I would not know her today) created a desire in my heart, something I would judge like this disciple when he said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Now, we are turning to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, to follow up on the Lord's teaching on prayer. We will go through the Lord's Prayer, and hope the Lord's Prayer will go through to us.

You know it is possible to pray or to say the Lord's Prayer a thousand times without praying it once. We are not talking about saying pretty prayers. God is not interested in pretty prayers. God is not even interested in ecclesiastical prayers, when we come with our ecclesiastical phraseologies, our Pentecostal clichés. God must be so tired of them. We want real prayer without necessarily a specific format. Now let us see what the Lord taught these disciples:

"And when you pray, you shall 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 to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father, which sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like to them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him." Matthew 6:5-8

One night, a few years ago, the Lord awakened me with His Presence very early in the morning. I do not recall the hour. He drew my attention to this area of truth, and I began to see something I had never seen before. I will be sharing some of these things with you.

Here, the Lord is answering this disciple's prayer. Did you notice that as the Lord is teaching them how to pray that He is making reference to three different kinds of prayers. We have in the passage I have read, three different kinds of prayer offered by three different kinds of people, using three different kinds of methods with three different kinds of results. This should be interesting.

In verse 5, the Lord makes reference to the prayer of a hypocrite. I know there are no hypocrites here, but we will talk about them anyway. In verse 6, the Lord talks about the prayer of a child of God, a son. In verse 7 and 8, He talks about the prayer of a heathen. Do you notice that in teaching these disciples how to pray, He is also teaching them how not to pray? We need the negative as well as the positive. I will speak on the negative first, because the positive will take most of our time.

The prayer of a hypocrite, "You shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets." Notice something: Jesus did not say they loved to pray. It was not praying which they loved, but they loved to pray, standing in the streets. It was the place of their prayers that they loved more than their prayers. It is like saying, "They loved to pray standing in Times Square, or some other popular place." What for?

Not because those places were conducive to prayer, but because those places are good places for observation. They liked to be observed. They loved to be observed by as many people as possible.

It was not so much that they prayed to God. It was rather that they said prayers in pretense of praying to God, when in reality their primary objective was to receive the praises of men. They wanted to make beautiful prayers. They made long prayers. They liked to have their pretended spirituality observed. They wanted the congratulations of the people.

I am going to read to you from my notes on the Lord's Prayer. These are the characteristics of the hypocrite's prayer:

Wrong motivation - The hypocrite prays to men under the guise of praying to God. In actuality he does not pray, he only parades his pretended devotion in order to solicit men's favorable opinion and admiration.

False evaluation - The hypocrites with their irreligious religion were more interested in being seen by men than they were in being heard by God, because they valued the praise of men much more than the praise of God.

Vanity - The hypocrites' yearning for the gratification of his vainglorious desires made him select the public concourses and religious centers for prayer not because they loved to pray, but because they loved to be seen, there. They would not bother praying in secret.

Worthless compensation - Inasmuch as the religious hypocrites were only interested in the praise of men, that is the only reward they get which is at best only a temporary reward of doubtful merit.

Jesus said, "When you pray, do not pray like the hypocrites, with a wrong motivation, having a false evaluation, vain ostentation and worthless compensation." That's the hypocrite's prayer and Jesus said, "Do not pray as they pray."

Now we will drop down to the heathen's prayer, because the son's prayer will occupy our principal time. The heathen's prayer, and here is meant the gentiles, the non-Jews, also has its characteristics. Verse 7, "When you pray, use not vain repetition as the heathen do."

Most anyone who has been in, what we call, heathen countries, can observe the routine, the endless repetition in their places of worship. I am not suggesting we cannot repeat a prayer. I am not saying anything against repetition. Repetition is a matter of definition. Here, it is a case of vain repetition.

I have prayed a thousand times like Solomon, "Give Your servant a hearing heart." I have often prayed this at night, before going to bed. A hearing heart is an understanding heart, one that harkens.

I have also prayed Moses' prayer many times; "Show me now Your way, that I may know You." This is not repetition, but simply offering a fresh prayer in the same words, but the heathen's prayer is mere repetitiousness, thinking that by repeating the same words over and over, the very repetitiousness is going to bring merit.

I remember a sick lady who was praying something like this, "O Lord, heal me, heal me, heal me, heal me, heal me." This is the heathen's prayer. Did you ever hear Pentecostal heathen pray? They say it over and over again. There is a difference between mere repetitiousness and praying the same thing time and again. Jesus said:

"When you pray, use not vain repetition as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Matthew 6:7

It's not the multiplication of words any more than it is the length of the prayers of the Pharisees who thought the longer they made their prayers, the greater would be the results. I rather think that people who know how to pray are not likely to pray very long prayers. I suspect many times people in church make their long unending prayers because they do not do any praying at home.

Some mighty powerful prayers can be extremely short, and prayers that stretch all the way from New York to San Francisco could not produce anything. It is not their length, and it is not the repetitiousness, the multiplication of words. Rather, it is something all together different. Consider what Jesus said, and we will get into the difference:

"Be not you therefore like to them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him." Matthew 6:8

The Lord is pointing somewhat indirectly to their relationship to the heavenly Father because the effectiveness of our prayers is more determined by our personal relationship to the heavenly Father than it is by the choice of our words, or by the correct use of our grammar, or any such thing. It is much more a matter of personal relationship.

Briefly, I want to give you here the idea of the heathen's prayer, also four characteristics reading from my notes:

Characteristics of the heathen's prayer:

- 1) Wrong method - The heathen relies on the multiplication of words and mechanical recitation and reiteration of his requests as a meritorious means of being heard.
- 2) False assumption - Believing that the virtue of his prayers lies in the mere utterance of words, the heathen mistakenly takes for granted that he is being heard.
- 3) Vain repetition - The heathen seeks to render the empty verbosity of his prayers more effective by much repetition, thus reciting merely the same prayers over and over again without ever praying any of them.
- 4) Worthless effort - The futility of the heathen's prayer arises from the fact of his ignorance concerning the nature of true prayer, which is not a matter of words, but of meaning; not of form, but of heart; not of outward beauty, but of inward reality.

Notice again in verse 8, "Be not you therefore like to them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him." Here we are told that we are not to pray like the heathen because our Father already knows what we need. So, when we pray, let's say for money, which is a popular subject in Bible school, and I have considerable to say on the laws that govern God's supply of our personal needs.

God, our Father, is already informed. Still, He wants us to pray.

Wife and I were Pastoring, and we had it very, very hard financially. That was in the early 1930's. One day she said to me, "Daddy, could I have \$5.00? I need to go shopping." I said, "Elizabeth, I do not have anything." She asked, "I cannot go to the A&P?" I said, "I just do not have it." And the A&P does not accept faith as legal tender.

This struck me so that I said, "You just stay here. I want to go in my room." I went to the bedroom. I am giving you this thing accurately. This begins to take you into my style of praying, as I pray differently. I do not come to God in this way, "Now Lord, I am going to storm the gates of heaven." I do not beat the dust out of the carpet to get an answer from God. That is the heathen's prayer.

I have my ways, and I will stay with them. I had a bill from Pan American one year, \$1,600 for some kind of a ticket: Walter H. Beuttler, round-the-world fares \$1,600. I was in my office at the school. In my office I had a large map of the world. I looked at this bill and said, "Lord, this is funny, they have the wrong address." You see, when the Lord asks me to travel, I talk to Him about fares. And the Lord said, "If I send you, I pay your fare. If you send yourself, you pay your own."

So I said, "Father, it is Your responsibility to pay this bill. It is my responsibility to go." So I put my hand on the Far East, the other hand on this bill. I said, "Father, I just got this bill from Pan American, but actually it should be addressed to You."

So, I laid this five dollar need before the Lord and soon, He supplied.

What shall we say? We will say with the disciple, "Lord teach us to pray."

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