

Meet Your Psychiatrist: He Teaches You to Pray

by Warren Wiersbe

The Holy Spirit is essential for effective prayer, and we must involve Him in our prayer life to pray effectively.

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Scripture: Luke 2:25

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Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal anecdotes about growing up in a close-knit neighborhood where everyone referred to his parents as 'ma' and 'pa.' He emphasizes the importance of being a child of God in order to have the ability to pray. The speaker also highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in preparing our hearts for prayer and giving us the desire and power to pray. Additionally, he mentions that even as believers, we may not always know what to pray for, but this should not discourage us as even the apostle Paul admitted to not knowing everything.

Transcript

Certainly one of the greatest privileges we have as Christians is the privilege of prayer. Whether or not we take advantage of this privilege is up to us, but certainly God has presented it to us. Back in the Old Testament days, once a year, the high priest alone could go into the Holy of Holies.

In New Testament days, every believer is a priest, and we may not only go into the Holy of Holies, we may live in the Holy of Holies. Prayer is an important part of our lives. In fact, I think we can say without fear of argument that you and I are what our prayers are.

Our Christian life cannot be divorced from our prayer life. If our prayer life is weak, our Christian life is weak. If our prayer life is unintelligent, our Christian life is unintelligent.

You can't divorce praying from living. Jesus said men ought always to pray and not to faint. The book of Romans has an interesting statement about prayer in chapter 8, verses 26 and 27.

We're talking about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and tonight we're going to discover that the Holy Spirit helps us in our praying. If you and I will only learn how to pray, all of our problems are going to be solved. The solving of every problem, the meeting of every need, the fighting of every battle,

the accomplishment of every purpose is all wrapped up in praying.

If you'll go through your Bible and just start to mark the prayers of God's people, you'll discover that everything that God ever did as a part of his great plan on this earth was in answer to prayer. Even the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was in answer to prayer. There were people like Elizabeth and Simeon who were praying for the coming of the Messiah.

Even the second coming of Jesus Christ for his church is going to be in answer to prayer. The last prayer in the Bible is, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Romans 8, verse 26.

Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit himself 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.

The Book of Romans has a great emphasis on prayer. For example, in chapter 1, verses 9 and 10, Paul prays, For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come to you. Here is Paul's prayer for guidance.

He wants the Lord to guide him that he might be able to go to Rome. And you and I have prayed like this. We've prayed for God to direct us.

We've prayed for God to open the way. Over in chapter 10, the Apostle Paul prays, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. Not only do we pray for God's guidance in our lives, but we pray for lost souls.

Somebody stopped me one day and said, Do you believe we should pray for the lost? Paul did. Paul prayed for the lost. There are no spiritual births unless there is spiritual travail.

And Paul knew what it was like to travail for souls. In chapter 12, verse 12, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing diligently in prayer. Here he's praying for the church.

He lists in chapter 12, the gifts that God has given to the church and the responsibilities we have to one another. And he said, one of these responsibilities is diligently to pray for each other. I wonder if we do pray for each other.

Now, people say, well, I pray for the pastor and the pastor appreciates that. But Paul says, continuing diligent in prayer concerning the whole church. Then in chapter 15, Paul prays verses 30 and 31.

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea, and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted by the saints. Here he's praying for God to bless his ministry and deliver him from enemies. So Paul knew what it was to pray.

He prayed for the lost. He prayed for guidance. He prayed for the church.

He prayed for God's deliverance from enemies. But at the heart of all of this is the work of the Holy Spirit given in chapter 8, verses 26 and 27. Now, Paul is teaching us in these two verses that you and I, as God's children, cannot pray effectively apart from the Holy Spirit.

I want to repeat that. You and I cannot pray effectively apart from the Holy Spirit. And in order for us to pray effectively, the Apostle Paul gives to us some basic truths that he wants us to lay hold of and practice.

They're very simple, but they're very important. Truth number one, only God's children can pray. Only God's children can pray.

Now, I've had unsaved people tell me that God has answered prayer for them, and I believe that he does, but he's not obligated to. I sometimes do things for the neighbor's children, but I'm not obligated to. When I was a child, I have two brothers and a sister, and we had a whole block full of friends.

Back in those days, you know, people lived in the same place. They stayed there, raised their kids in the same place. Today in the city of Chicago, every year 20% of the population moves someplace.

But there were probably some 15 or 20 of us who played together on that street. They had a football team and a baseball team, and the girls used to roller skate and ride their bikes and things like that. And somehow they all congregated at our house.

There are several reasons why. One, it was in the middle of the block and it was easy to get to. Two, we had a swing on our big back porch.

And three, there were four of us, which meant we each had a group of friends, and when we had our friends over, you had a mob. But the interesting thing was this. Everybody on that block called my parents Ma and Pa.

Everybody. I recall a vacuum cleaner salesman was there one day, and here were six or eight kids running around, and Ma this and Pa that. He couldn't quite figure the whole thing out, particularly because I had a very close Jewish friend who used to play with me, and my folks were Ma and Pa to him just as much as they were to me.

But you know, my parents were not obligated to take care of all these kids who called them Ma and Pa. Sometimes they were kind to them, they were always patient with them, but they had no obligation. I believe God sometimes answers the prayers of unsaved people, but he's not obligated to.

You see, in order to pray, we have to involve the whole Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. An unsaved person cannot come and say, Father.

He's not in the family. As many as received him to them gave he the power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name. And an unsaved person may mouth the word Father, but he can't say it from his heart.

And he can't come in the name of Jesus. It's impossible to pray without the name of Jesus. If you ask in my name, I'll give it to you.

But how can an unsaved person come in the name of Jesus when he hasn't even believed on that name? There's none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And you can't pray apart from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is one who gives us access into God's presence.

Through the Holy Spirit, we have abundant access into God's presence through the blood of Jesus Christ. And if an unsaved person doesn't have the Holy Spirit living down inside, if any man have not the Spirit of

Christ, he's none of his. So if you cannot call God your Father, if you cannot use the name of Jesus, if you don't have the Holy Spirit living within, you really can't pray.

You can say prayers, but you really can't pray. This is one of the tragedies of living without Jesus Christ. Now, I know it's an awful thing for a person to live without Christ and die without Christ.

That's a terrible thing. The worst thing about being unsaved is someday going to hell. Not because God wants to send you there.

My Bible tells me that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, not for men, but because people send themselves there. But you know, while they're waiting, think of what they're missing. We visit in the hospitals, and there are people in the hospitals who really can't pray.

An unsaved person is going through pain and agony. He hasn't got a Father to talk to. A Christian does.

One of the beautiful things about being a Christian is you can talk to your Father. The Son of God is there, your high priest to help you, the Holy Spirit's within. Only a child of God really can pray.

You see, the first prayer I uttered that really came through was given to me by the Holy Spirit. If you'll look back in Zechariah, that's the next to the last book in the Old Testament, Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, you'll find a name for the Holy Spirit that is very important. He's talking about that future day when Israel is going to believe on their Messiah.

And in Zechariah 12, 10, he says, And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications. And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son. You see what he's saying here? He's saying that when the unsafe person is convicted by the Holy Spirit and realizes he's rejected Christ, and the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to that person, He gives to the sinner the spirit of supplication and of grace, and our hearts are broken.

Can you remember that hour when you cried out to God for mercy and salvation? The Holy Spirit did that. It wasn't something you worked up yourself. It wasn't done by a preacher.

It wasn't done by some soul winner. It was done by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit worked in your heart and brought you to a place of supplication where you cried out for the grace of God.

Now when you do that, then the Holy Spirit puts the second prayer into your life. The first prayer is, God be merciful to me, a sinner. Save me for Jesus' sake.

That's the first prayer he puts into your life. The second one comes right after that. Abba, Father.

You see, when you've trusted Christ as your Savior, then the Holy Spirit moves in and He inspires a second prayer. Not be merciful to me, but Father. And that's the beginning of our prayer life.

Your prayer life started with trusting Christ as your Savior, calling upon Him. How is a person saved? For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That's prayer.

And this prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Only God's children can pray. Now if I speak to one person here tonight who has never trusted Christ, why don't you right now, don't even wait for the invitation, right now where you are, let the Spirit of God so move in your heart that you'll just call out to

God and say, save me, I need your grace.

That's the second truth that comes to us from Romans 8, 26 and 27. It's this. God's children cannot pray in their own power.

God's children cannot pray in their own power. You see, praying is not saying words with our mouths. You've probably read somewhere in your reading about this very famous prayer that was uttered out in Boston and the newspapers reported it as the most eloquent prayer ever heard by a Boston audience.

My friend, nobody prays for an audience. Eloquence is not always praying. Length of time is not always praying.

The ability to quote Scripture is not always praying, although it's good to have Scripture in our praying. Tears do not always mean praying. Emotion does not always mean praying.

The child of God cannot pray in his own power. He says here, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. Now, what is our infirmity? Well, our infirmity involves two things.

Number one, we don't know how to pray. And number two, we don't know what to pray for. Now, here he's talking about the first one.

We don't know how to pray. Oh, you see, I've been saved for 15 years. I know how to pray.

Do you? My experience has been the more we pray and the more we read the Word of God, the more we discover we don't know how to pray and how ignorant we are of the Word of God. Has that been your experience? I think it has. We don't know how to pray as we should.

Now, Paul's warning us here, beware of false praying. Not everything that passes for prayer is really prayer. Let me illustrate what I mean from the Old Testament.

Turn to Psalm 141. Psalm 141 makes a beautiful comparison. It compares prayer to the burning of incense.

Now, in our services here at Moody Church, we don't burn any incense, but he compares prayer to the burning of incense. Psalm 141. Lord, I cry unto thee, make haste unto me, give ear unto my voice when I cry unto thee.

Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. You know, of course, that nobody in the Old Testament or the New Testament folded their hands to pray, nor did they put their hands together. This is the Oriental way to pray.

I'm not criticizing it. I'm just describing it. The Old Testament Jew, when he prayed, lifted up his hands.

Of course, you know why. He expected to get something. And I think he's right.

When Solomon prayed and dedicated the temple, lifted up his hands. Now, there's no special posture for prayer. Sometimes you find people kneeling to pray.

In the Bible, you find them standing, sitting. David went in and sat before the Lord, walking, hanging on a cross, in stocks, in a jail, lying flat on your face. There are many different postures for prayer.

The important thing is the posture of the heart. Now, in the Old Testament tabernacle, there were two altars. At the gate of the tabernacle was the big brazen altar where they burned the sacrifices.

That's where the blood was shed. But if you went right straight through, past the laver, right through the outside veil into the holy place, right up to the Holy of Holies, where the veil was, there was a smaller golden altar that was not used for sacrifice. Blood was put on it to purify it, but it was not used for sacrifice.

It was used for burning the incense. Now, the burning of the incense is a picture of prayer. Back in the Old Testament, God told Moses just how to mix that incense.

He couldn't manufacture it himself. He couldn't call the Avon lady, you know, and get various things. No, he had to use just exactly what God told him to use.

And he mixed that incense. And that incense was burned on the altar. And as the smoke and the fragrance went up, it was a symbol of prayer going up to God.

Now, there were two warnings that were issued about this. First of all, beware of false incense. Don't have a counterfeit incense on the altar.

Exodus chapter 30 and verse 9. God said, you use the mixture I gave to you. Don't bring any other mixture. Beware of false incense.

In Leviticus chapter 10 and verse 1, God said, don't bring false fire. Now, here are two problems in our prayer life. False incense and false fire.

We try to manufacture our own emotion. We try to work up our own devotion. God said, I can't accept that.

I fear that sometimes our praying is carnal. I don't have the kind of courage Mr. Moody had. He sometimes interrupted people's praying.

That's how Mr. Grenfell was one to the mission field. He was about to walk out of the meeting. A fellow was praying his way around the world, you know, and Mr. Moody finally stood up and said, while our brother is praying, let's sing hymn number so and so.

And Mr. Grenfell said, this man is very practical. I like him. And ultimately, he was called to be a missionary.

I don't have the courage to do that. I'm sure people have wanted to do it for me at some time or another. We've got to be very, very careful that we don't pray in our own strength.

We don't manufacture false fire. We don't manufacture false incense. Now, this takes us back to Romans chapter eight, where Paul uses an interesting word in verse 26.

The spirit also helpeth our infirmity. That word help is an interesting word. In the English language, the word help has four letters, H-E-L-P.

But this word in the Greek has 17 letters to it. It's a big word. I'm glad it was never on any of the examinations I had to take.

The spirit helps us. It's a great big, long word composed of three little words. These three little words mean this, together with, face to face, to take hold of.

This word help means that the Holy Spirit comes and takes hold of our burden, face to face with us, and he helps us together with us to carry it. I suppose one of the greatest Greek scholars that America ever produced was A.T. Robertson. A.T. Robertson illustrates this big, long word with two men carrying a log.

Here's a man trying to carry a log. He tries to get it in the middle. It's too big.

He gets to one end. It's too bulky. He can't handle it.

Along comes a friend who picks up the other end of the log. Paul is saying here the Holy Spirit does not pray instead of us. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray.

Now how do we do this? We've got to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. This great, long word that is translated help in verse 26 is found only one other place in the entire New Testament. It's interesting where it's found.

It's found in Luke chapter 10, verse 40, where Martha comes in and says to Jesus, doesn't it bother you that my sister's left me to work alone? Now have her come and help me. Martha wasn't saying she's going to do it instead of me. We're going to do it together.

Praying is something that the Holy Spirit and the believer do together. And when you find yourself coming to the place where you can't pray or you don't want to pray, you don't feel like praying, this is when the Holy Spirit moves in. I suppose we do some of our finest praying in terms of getting things accomplished when we feel least like praying.

Now if your prayer life depends on your emotions, you won't have much of a prayer life. The devil will see to it and the flesh will see to it that you and I don't feel like praying. But if our prayer life depends on the Holy Spirit, a beautiful thing happens.

You come and you say, Spirit of God, I can't pray. I don't know how to pray. I don't feel like praying.

I've got a headache. My ulcers are bothering me. And it's raining outside.

And who feels like praying? That's when you need to pray the most. And the Holy Spirit of God moves into the altar of your heart. You know what He does? He begins to fan the flame.

He begins to feed the flame of the altar of your heart. And as the Holy Spirit takes hold with you, both of you start to carry the log, if I may change the comparison. Both of you begin to carry the burden.

And the Holy Spirit of God moves in and gives us the power and the desire to pray. Only God's children can pray. And God's children cannot pray in their own power.

Now, I want to suggest that you look at Psalm 10, if you will, and then we'll move on to the third truth. Psalm 10 and verse 17. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble.

Thou wilt prepare their heart. Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear. Isn't that a beautiful thing? The Holy Spirit of God will prepare our hearts that we might be able to pray.

I make this suggestion to you. It's only a suggestion. When you want to pray, I'm not talking about emergency prayers, but when you're ready for your prayer time, whether it's in the morning or whenever it is, you're going to talk to God.

Spend some time reading the Word. Let the Holy Spirit of God just take the Word of God and prepare your heart. Meditate on the goodness of God, not the meanness of sin, the goodness of God.

Don't start introspecting and having an autopsy and seeing how wicked you are. No, just meditate on the goodness of God and let the Holy Spirit of God prepare your heart. And a very wonderful thing happens.

The Holy Spirit of God moves on to the altar of your heart and that flame begins to grow and you have the desire to pray and you have the dynamic for prayer. There's a third truth. God's children often don't know what to pray for.

Now, this encourages me because Paul says, we, we know not what we should pray for. But I thought the apostle Paul knew everything. Oh, no.

There were times in Paul's life when he did not know what to pray for. You say, well, pastor, I always know what to pray for. God bless you.

Pray that someday I'll get there. Paul tells me in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh and three times I prayed that God would take it away and God didn't. Paul didn't know how to pray.

I read over in Acts chapter 16 that Paul wanted to go here and God closed the door. And so Paul wanted to go there and the Spirit closed the door. He tried to go here and God closed the door.

That encourages me. And Paul called a prayer meeting and said, man, I don't know how to pray. I think it's one of the evidences that we're growing in our spiritual lives that sometimes we just don't know what to pray for.

You see, little children always know what to ask for. They ask for whatever they want and whatever they want is what they expect to get. More people have quit praying because of disappointments in prayer than anything else.

I've had people say to me, pastor, I don't pray. I asked for this and God didn't do it. And I say, well, someday you may look back and be thankful God didn't do it.

Have you lived long enough to be thankful for unanswered prayer? I think you have. You see, when we're young in the faith, we're sure what God wants to do. It's raining and we're going to have to do something so it's God's will that it stop raining.

We don't think about the farmers who need rain. We don't think about anybody else who may have sunshine for me. But as we grow in the Lord, we realize that our prayers interact and our prayers intersect.

For me to pray without thinking about you is selfish. The Lord's prayer doesn't start out my father. It starts out our father.

And I don't think God's going to give something to me that's going to hurt you. I don't think God's going to answer a prayer for me that's going to hurt you. All of our prayers intersect and all of our prayers interact.

And for this reason, often I don't know what to pray for. People come and say, Pastor, I'm about to lose my job. Pray that I'll get a job.

I don't know sometimes how to pray. Whether I should pray, Father, help him to know if he should go to school and get more training, or Father, should he move to a different city? I don't know how to pray. So I pray now, Father, this man needs work.

Somebody comes and says, I'm going to have surgery. Pray that I'll get through it. I don't know how to pray sometimes.

I wish I did. Now here's where the Holy Spirit comes in. The Holy Spirit of God helps us in our prayer life to know how to pray and what to pray for.

You know, of course, that praying must be done in the will of God. I think we better turn to that passage just to nail it down. 1 John chapter 5 and verses 14 and 15.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. These verses simply say when the child of God prays in the will of God, he gets the answer from God.

But we don't always know what the will of God is. Robert Law, in his great commentary on 1 John, makes this statement. Prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven.

Prayer is getting God's will done on earth. It's good to know that. Now back to Romans 8, there are three words that tell us how the Holy Spirit helps us pray in the will of God.

These three words are searches, groaning, and interceding. These are three ministries of the Holy Spirit. There's the searching ministry, there's the groaning ministry, and there's the interceding ministry, and they all go together.

Let's talk about searching. Verse 27, and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he, the Holy Spirit, maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit always knows how to pray.

Let's talk about searching. Now you follow me ever so closely because I'm going to go into detail on this. It's an important part of praying.

When you and I come to the place of prayer, there needs to be a searching ministry on the part of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Oh, you say, Pastor, you're making prayer so complicated. No, I'm not.

I'm making it very simple. I can still hear Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse pray. He always prayed like this.

We come to thee, Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. I recall the first time I heard him pray, I thought, what's he talking about? Then I remembered over in Jude, it says praying in the Holy Ghost. In Ephesians chapter 6, it says praying in the Spirit.

So we pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Now there's a three-fold searching ministry. Number one, let God the Son search your mind and your heart.

Over in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 23, Jesus Christ is the one who searches the heart, Revelation 2, 23. And all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the reins or the mind and the heart. So

when I come to pray, I don't just rush into the presence of God.

I should pray the way the psalmist prayed, Psalm 139. You know this prayer, don't you? Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, know my thoughts.

See if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting. O thou searcher of mine, search my mind.

And if there's something there that shouldn't be there, I confess it and I forsake it. O searcher of hearts, search my heart. If there's something that's wrong, put it away from me.

The first step in prayer is to have God the Son search your mind and your heart. If I regard iniquity in my heart, what? The Lord will not hear me. The second stage is this.

The Holy Spirit searches the word. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. You cannot pray apart from the word of God. If you abide in me, said Jesus, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you. 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 9. As it is written, I have not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him. Not just in heaven in the future, but on earth right now.

You have no idea what God has prepared for you. You say, how do I find out? Verse 10 tells you. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.

That's in the word of God. The Holy Spirit wrote the book. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.

You know what he's saying here? When I come to pray, I ask God the Son to search my mind and my heart for cleansing. Then I ask the Holy Spirit to search the word and I read the word of God. Always read the word of God in connection with your praying.

Because the Spirit of God searches the word and he shows you what to pray for. He gives you the promises to claim. He gives you the guidance that you need.

It's a beautiful experience. Now having done that, the third stage is God the Father searches the mind of the Holy Spirit. I've had God the Son search my mind and my heart so I'm clean before him.

God the Holy Spirit has searched the word and taught me and revealed God's will to me. Now I come and I pray and the Holy Spirit of God prays while I'm praying. And God the Father searches the mind of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit knows what I need. He lives with me. And the Spirit of God is taking my prayers, excuse the analogy, he's filtering my prayers.

He filters out the foolishness, the selfishness. You have not because you ask not, you ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it upon your own loss. And so the Holy Spirit of God is filtering out the foolishness and the selfishness and the carnality of my praying.

And God the Father searches the mind of the Spirit and says I know just what to give to him. I know just what he needs. That's praying in the Holy Spirit.

It's interesting when the Holy Spirit begins to pray through you. It's a very intelligent thing. It's not an unintelligent thing.

Paul said I will pray in the Spirit and with the understanding. When the Spirit of God begins to pray through you, sometimes there is a wrestling, sometimes there's a great liberty. You don't go by your feelings.

But somehow there's a confidence that you know you're praying in the will of God. It isn't something you work up. It's not self-hypnosis.

It's just the Spirit of God giving you that confidence. That's the searching ministry of the Spirit. The second ministry of the Spirit is the groaning ministry.

He tells us here the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. It doesn't mean we groan, although sometimes I do groan in my praying. What he's talking about here is getting to the place where we're praying and our heart's desire is so full, our hearts are so burdened, we can't even express it in words.

It means getting beyond now I lay me down to sleep. As a Christian grows in his prayer life, he comes to the place where he knows there's a need. Here's some loved one or friend that he's praying for, or here's some need in the church, here's some need on the mission field, and the burden is so heavy, and our feelings are so intense we can't even put it into words.

That's when the Holy Spirit moves in and He groans. Now these are unuttered groans. I've heard people say the deepest prayer is a groan if the Holy Spirit does the groaning through us.

Yes. You say, I've never come to that place in my praying. I hope you will.

I hope you come to the place in your praying where you can just say to God, oh the desires of my heart are before you. You read my heart. Oh Lord, I just can't talk anymore.

There's just such a burden there, and all you can do is groan and weep. That's when the searching ministry and there's the groaning ministry. May I show you a promise back in the Old Testament, Psalm 38 verse 9, because it might encourage some of you who have loved ones.

You are so burdened for you hardly know how to pray. Psalm 38 verse 9, Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee. He hears your groan.

He hears the Holy Spirit, which leads to the third ministry, interceding. All of this is intercession. This word intercede means, it's beautiful, this word intercede means to meet, to bend over, and to plead for.

Here we come with our needs, and the Holy Spirit meets us, and He bends over us, and He sees our need, and He pleads for us. I have an intercessor up in heaven. Jesus Christ is making intercession for me.

I have an intercessor down here on earth. The Holy Spirit of God is making intercession for me with groanings that are incapable of being uttered. They are so deep, and so intercession really means working with the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit knows the will of God. Don't be afraid to pray, and don't be afraid of God's will. I was in the hospital visiting recently and was talking to a patient who was so worried about the future, and I just simply said, never be afraid of the will of God.

Nothing can go wrong in the will of God. The Spirit searches, and the Spirit groans, and the Spirit intercedes. We've seen three truths now.

I want to show you a fourth truth, and then we shall go home to practice real prayer. Only God's children can pray. God's children cannot pray in their own power.

The Spirit provides the power. God's children don't know what to pray for, but the Spirit searches, and groans, and intercedes. Finally, prayer is a costly, demanding experience.

Prayer is not cheap. Real praying is a costly experience. It costs God for us to pray.

God the Father gave His Son. God the Son gave His life. God the Spirit gave up His home in heaven to come down here and live for nearly 2,000 years, and He has to live with me, and He has to live with you.

Why is the Holy Spirit here to help me pray? But Jesus had to die before the Spirit could come. Prayer is a costly thing. Don't treat it cheaply.

The altar at the beginning of the tabernacle area was brazen. The prayer altar in the holy place was golden. It costs something to pray.

Now, if prayer to you is just two or three words in the morning, three or four sentences at lunch and dinner, a few words before you go off to sleep, forget it. Real prayer costs something. It costs God.

It costs the people who came before us. I wouldn't even have the book of Romans if it weren't for Paul. It costs Paul something to write the book of Romans.

It costs Jeremiah something to write the book of Jeremiah. I can't pray apart from the Holy Spirit and the Bible, and people gave their lives to give me a Bible. Prayer is not cheap, and it costs you and me something.

You see, if real praying is in the Holy Spirit, that means two things. Number one, I've got to walk in the Spirit. Now, if I'm walking in the flesh, I can't pray.

If I'm worldly, I can't pray. All I can pray is God cleanse me and forgive me. It costs me something and costs you something to pray.

To be able to pray in the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit of God groaning and interceding, knowing the will of God and praying through us, that costs something. Some Christians find it so easy to have a little bit of worldliness here, a little bit of carnality there. It's no problem.

It hasn't hurt anybody, hasn't it? What is there about us that we want to stay as close to God as we can to get enough blessings, but get as close to the world as we can to have a little bit of fun? It costs something to pray. Now, if you can go to worldly places and still pray, fine. If you and I can indulge in sensual things and still pray, I can't believe it.

Real prayer costs something. It means walking in the Spirit. It means, secondly, not grieving the Holy Spirit.

If I'm grieving the Holy Spirit of God, He can't intercede. If I'm not on good terms with the Holy Spirit, He's not going to be able to intercede. He's going to convict.

And the Word of God says, grieve not the Holy Spirit. And if you'll read Ephesians 4, you'll find out how we grieve the Spirit. Lying, gossiping, criticizing, an unforgiving spirit, malice, unkindness.

Not the big sins that the world knows about, just what Campbell Morgan used to call sins in good standing. The most important thing you and I do is to pray. Our witnessing is ineffective without prayer.

Our service is meaningless without prayer. Our fellowship with God depends upon prayer. And the Holy Spirit of God leads us in prayer.

He's the one who lights the fire on the altar. He's the one who makes sure that we pray in the will of God, which leads us to two questions as we close. Question number one, do you have the Holy Spirit? Now if you don't, you can't pray.

If you've trusted Christ as your Savior, you have the Holy Spirit. Question number two, does the Holy Spirit have you? That's the big question. If we come to the place where we're on good terms with the Holy Spirit, and we can really say, He's interceding through me and God is answering prayer because I'm praying in the will of God.

Father in heaven, not only do we have to come and confess the sins of our lives, but we sometimes have to come and confess the sins of our ministries that we've not prayed as we should. Our praying has been selfish, careless, cold. Oh God, teach us to pray.

Help us, Heavenly Father, to be so close to the Holy Spirit through the word that we'll pray in your will and have that beautiful experience of praying in the Holy Spirit of God. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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