

# True Discipleship - Part 2

by William MacDonald

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*Effective prayer comes from a strong inward necessity, where we are driven to God in urgency and sincerity, and is characterized by honesty, sincerity, and specificity.*

**Duration:** 24:31

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 10:22, James 4:3

**Topics:** "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of earnest and believing prayer. He encourages listeners to approach God with a childlike faith, rather than relying on their own knowledge and understanding. The speaker also highlights the significance of fully surrendering to God and abandoning oneself to His will. He warns against selfish prayers and urges believers to prioritize the glory of God above their own desires. The sermon references James 4:3, which cautions against asking amiss and consuming things on one's own lusts. The speaker concludes by challenging listeners to step out in faith and pray for the salvation of entire countries, illustrating the potential impact of even one family's dedicated prayers.

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## Transcript

Well, this morning I thought we'd speak on the subject of prayer in connection with the life of discipleship. And we'll read as our scripture portion, Hebrews chapter 10, beginning with verse 19. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 19.

Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let's look at verse 22 again, because this is the verse we have particularly in mind. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Someone has suggested that in this verse we have the four conditions of answered prayer. First of all, you have a true heart. That means no deceit.

A true heart, no deceitfulness in our prayers. Then you have full assurance of faith. That means no doubting.

Then you have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. That means no deliberate sin. Then you have our bodies washed with pure water.

That means no defilement. That little outline, written by someone else, says a lot in a little. Now, I don't know if you've noticed, but there's only one satisfactory book on prayer in all the world, and that is the Bible.

It's interesting how many men have written books on prayer, and they all leave something to be desired. This is a problem we faced at the school, at this very connection. Where can you get the ideal text on prayer? Well, we have it in the Word of God.

I think if many of us were going to be honest with ourselves this morning, we would have to admit that prayer is one of the weakest aspects of our Christian life. I think we'd have to admit that many times we simply go through the motions, and that if the truth were told, sometimes the motions are rather dreary, and that we don't see the spectacular in our prayer life, and we don't see the fire falling from heaven the way we should. And I think we should give ourselves to a meditation on this subject this morning and find out what is the matter.

And I'd like to just give ten or eleven suggestions with regard to prayer this morning, trusting that some of them will really be of help to our souls. The first thing I'd like to suggest is this, that the best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity. The best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity.

When our lives are going along serenely and smoothly, we don't cry to God with urgency. We don't storm the gates of heaven. But when sickness comes in, or bereavement, or a financial crisis, or something of the sort, we really know what it means to get down before God and cry out to Him.

And we can do business with God at a time like that. The best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity. Now, keeping that in mind, what do we do nowadays? Well, the fact of the matter is that most of us cushion ourselves against every possible contingency that could come into our lives.

We spend our little lives building up reserves so that really we're rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing and we wonder why our prayer life is ineffective. Someone has said that the arrow that is to reach heaven must be shot from a bow that's fully bent. And we take every precaution in the world nowadays to make sure that there'll be no necessity of our bow being fully bent.

And we've followed along with the world in this craze for security And this lust for being insured against every possible trial that can come in the Christian life is the very thing that's defeating our prayer life and making it a dull, listless thing. This is the same thing with our prayer meetings. What many of our prayer meetings need, more than anything else, is to be shut down.

The reason is we're not really in a position before God where we have to pray. You know, this comes home to my heart because for many years I used to sit with our prayer meetings. What many of our prayer meetings need, more than anything else, is to be shut down.

The reason is we're not really in a position before God where we have to pray. You know, this comes home to my heart because for many years I used to say that since I had been in the work of the Lord I never knew what it was to have my faith severely tested. That my needs had always been provided adequately and more than adequately.

You know, one day I woke up to the fact that the reason for that is that I was just using normal human shrewdness and cleverness and setting aside the money and building up the reserves and laying up treasures on earth. The very thing that the Savior forbade. If we take the words of the Lord Jesus literally lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth we'll know what it is to pray.

We really will. We'll know what it is to pray. The best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity.

And if we live our lives before the Lord in simplicity and devotion to Him we'll know how to pray. The second thing that I would suggest is this. There must be in our prayers no hypocrisy.

I believe God hates hypocrisy and deceit and especially at bent knee time. Especially when we're before Him. And I've suggested before in these meetings and I'll suggest again that it's the height of hypocrisy to get down on our knees before the Lord and pray for something when we have it in our own power to answer that prayer.

Supposing you should go down to Merced this morning and you should go out and stand on the tracks of the southern Pacific and one of the fast trains is coming along and you stand there and you cry out to God to deliver you from the oncoming train. Do you think you'll do it? Don't be ridiculous. God gave you two legs to answer that prayer and if you don't use them you'll be demolished by that train.

God isn't deceived. God isn't going to answer prayers when He's given it to us to answer them, is He? Do you know I think it's hypocrisy when we get down on our knees and ask the Lord to supply the needs of His work throughout the world and we coddle the very means with which to answer that prayer. Is that really being honest before God? I don't believe it.

I don't believe it. And I think it's the height of hypocrisy when I get down on my knees and ask the Lord to send workers to the nations of the world to the perishing millions and I could go and I'm not willing to go. That's hypocrisy.

And I'll tell you what would energize our prayer lives if we're so transparent and so sincere and so genuine in our prayers that we don't pray for anything that we have it in our own power to perform. Then, thirdly, I would suggest that our prayers should be simple, believing, and unquestioning. Simple, believing, and unquestioning.

You know, there are mysteries in prayer that I can't solve. I could stand here this morning and raise all kinds of questions about prayer, difficult questions that I myself couldn't answer. It wouldn't be edifying to do that.

There's something better than being able to unravel all the mysteries of prayer and that's simply to pray. If you sit down and start to think about prayer and all the complexities and all the difficulties you won't get anywhere. It's better to get down and storm the gates of heaven in simple, unquestioning faith.

And these are the people who really touch the throne of grace. I like what Augustine said. He said, The simple take heaven by force while we, with all our learning, fail to rise above flesh and blood.

That's good. The simple take heaven by force while we, with all our learning, fail to rise above flesh and blood. Don't try to solve all the theological problems connected with prayer.

Just get down and speak to God in earnest, believing prayer and see the fire fall from heaven. And then, fourthly, I would suggest that one of the great ingredients of prayer is this, that we should hold nothing back. As I suggested to you last night, I believe that God smiles down with special favor on lives that He sees that have been utterly abandoned to Himself.

Perhaps this is the thing that God would speak to our hearts during these conference meetings. Dear friend, may I ask you this morning, does the Lord have you where He wants you? Does He really? Could we really get down on our knees today, back in our cabins or in our tents, and say, Lord Jesus, here I am. I lay myself at your feet.

I'm willing to go anywhere you want me to go. I'm willing to do anything you want me to do. It might be a terrific blow to my pride that I'd never get over, but I want to be your man, in your place, doing your work.

Are you willing to do that? Or are you so wedded to your present state of things that you wouldn't dare to pray such a prayer? But just remember this, that yesterday's guidance isn't necessarily today's guidance. Just because the Lord might have wanted me at Emmaus Bible School yesterday doesn't mean He wants me there today or tomorrow, you know. And I'll tell you, if we're going to be real and genuine and effective for God, we've got to come to this place where we surrender ourselves to Him and we're willing to do what He wants us to do.

As Christians, we have no right to choose in the matter. Our responsibility is to take hands off as far as our lives are concerned and submit them to Him. Dear friends, I want to tell you, that if we put ourselves there and keep ourselves there by a day-by-day act of dedication to Christ, I think our prayer life will be a little more meaningful.

Be a little more meaningful. We'll be cast upon Him in a new and real and vital way. And then next, I would suggest that, and I don't understand some of these things, but I know they're true, that prayer is more vital when it costs us something.

Prayer is more vital when it costs us something. I was telling last night about these dear young people who get together and spend the night in prayer. They don't do this to talk about it.

In fact, there's no talk about it the next day. They just live a normal life the next day. They go to work and some of them play a basketball game the next evening.

It's not something for the flesh to display, but it's something that comes from a heart of devotion to Christ. And God answers from Heaven. Pray when it costs.

We've already quoted David. I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing. And in that connection, I can't help thinking of our dear brother Bill Patterson and the emphasis he puts in his ministry and in all that he does upon all night prayer meetings.

Well, I can't answer all the questions connected with it, but all I know is it really works. And then James tells us in chapter 4 and verse 3 that we should avoid selfish prayers. Let's just turn to that again.

James chapter 4 and verse 3 says, He ask and receive not, because he ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts or on your pleasures. There's a terrible snare in the Christian life, and it's a snare today in an age when people want to keep up with the Joneses. It's a snare to get down on our knees and to be selfish in our prayers, to think of our own comforts and our own pleasures and our own desires and

appetites and not primarily of the glory of God.

But the Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray. The prayer was, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, God's interest first.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Then, after all that, the supply of our daily bread. Give us day by day our daily bread.

Then I think again that in our prayers we should honor God with great requests. The poet has said, Thou art coming to a king. Great petitions with thee bring.

For his power and grace are such thou canst never ask too much. In a letter from Dale Roton recently, I read this thunderbolt. He said to me, Mr. McDonald, it's about time we launched out from the crib of faith and began to claim countries for Christ.

Did you know that set the wheels of my mind to thinking. It's about time we launched out from the crib of faith and started to claim countries for Christ. I began to think of a little family gathered together in their daily devotion.

I thought, now supposing that family starts to pray about the country of Portugal and every cent that family can spare would go into the work of the Lord in Portugal. Do you know in ten years it's astounding the percentage of the people of Portugal that could be reached with the gospel, just with one family. It is.

It's absolutely astounding. If you think in the terms of population and what a single family in the United States, just the things that it doesn't need, converting things into cash for the work of the Lord. Well, that's something to think about.

Thou art coming to attain great petitions which they bring. For his power and grace are such thou canst never ask too much. And I think that part of our shame is that we dishonored God by our paltry requests.

He's a great God and He loves to be greatly trusted. And then of course we must be sure that our prayers are in the will of God. Really it all boils down to this, doesn't it? And the idea as I see it in the New Testament is that in order for a Christian's prayer life to be effective, that Christian must be abiding in Christ.

And if he's abiding in Christ he'll be near to hear. He'll be near enough to the Lord Jesus so that the Lord Jesus' desires will be made known to him and through him to God in prayer. Mr. Woods was speaking on Sunday morning about what it means to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus.

What does it mean? It means that He's there beside you on your knees. As you're on your knees He's kneeling there beside you and His requests become your requests. It's the same as if He were praying.

And so in our prayers we should say what with the Lord Jesus? What's His desire? Well I think I know very well what part of the Lord Jesus' desire is. He's thirsting for water from the wells of Bethlehem. Thirsting for water, for a draft of water from the wells of Lebanon and India and Syria and Japan and China.

Precious souls for whom He died. Dear friends, if our prayers are going to be in His will we'll have compassion for the souls of men about us. We'll have a passion for the perishing.

Let me look on the crowd as my Savior did till my eyes with tears grow dim. Let me view with pity the wandering sheep and love them for love of Him. And then again in our prayer life we must keep short accounts with God.

Perhaps we should have mentioned this sooner. The psalmist said, if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me. And so in all our dealings with the Lord we must be transparent and clean and pure and sin must be confessed and forsaken whenever it is allowed to come in.

And then we should develop the attitude of prayer. A man who prays once or twice a day doesn't pray enough. Prayer should be the habit of our lives.

It should be the atmosphere in which we live. We should be like Nehemiah. He stood before the king.

A crisis came. A question was asked. So I looked to the God of heaven.

So I prayed to the God of heaven. In all the little decisions of life we should come to God and seek His will and His mind. And then finally our prayers should be specific.

We shouldn't wander all over the world with generalities but we should come to God with specific prayers because that's the way He loves to answer. And if we don't pray for specific things we'll never see the answers to our prayers. And it's when we see the answers to our prayers that we're encouraged to go on and lay hold of Him.

The poet has said, I know not by what methods rare, but this I know, God answers prayer. I know not when He sends the word that tells us fervent prayer is heard. I know it cometh soon or late.

Therefore we need to pray and wait. I know not if the blessing sought will come in just the guise I thought. I leave my prayers with Him alone whose will is wiser than my own.

The wonderful thing for me to see a group of young people as we spoke about last night who come before the Lord in prayer, who have great thoughts of God, who come to know God in an intimate, real, vital way, who speak to Him as to a loving Father, have utmost confidence in His power and ability to answer prayer, and who see those answers in a most spectacular way. We told you of answers last night, how God has opened the windows of heaven and poured them down of blessings such that they're not able to receive. You know, God can do that for you and for me.

If we're open and transparent, if we're yielded and surrendered to Him, if we're honest in His sight and He knows that He has us where He wants us, there's nothing God won't do for us. May the Lord incline our hearts to pray, to cry to Him, and to see all our service sparkle with fire from heaven.

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