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YAHSHUA, TEACH US TO PRAY

One of Adam's greatest blessings, while in the garden of Eden, was a direct communication with his Creator Yahweh. The Bible reminds us that Yahweh came "walking in the garden in the cool of the day..." (Genesis 3:8).

This may have been a daily pattern of direct conversation between Yahweh and the man, Adam, for we know He previously had been bringing all the animals to Adam to see what he would call each one. (Genesis 2:19-20). What a wonderful privilege it is for man to be able, even today, to take every decision of his life to Yahweh.

Some may feel since the rebellion in Eden, Yahweh no longer cares about our personal problems; no longer is He concerned with our anxieties of life. Such is not the case. Yahweh cares very much about our problems, so much that He has given a great deal of instructions and examples on how to present them to Him in an effective way. Although it may not be as direct as Adam enjoyed, we can have audience with Yahweh whenever we desire. This booklet is written to encourage every reader to greater communication with Him, to their everlasting benefit.

The Model Prayer

When Yahshua was preaching His famous Sermon on the Mount, His disciples were told the *do's and don'ts* of prayer.

First, let's take a look at the negatives. Public prayer should be brief and with the purpose of talking to Yahweh for our own benefit as well as the benefit of others. It should never be to impress others. Too often public prayers are said in long, drawn out and flowery terminology, just to leave the desired impression or theological teaching with the other listeners. This practice brings into

question the motive of the person leading in such a prayer.

Yahshua sternly labeled this kind of prayer as hypocritical, especially when we have a minority opinion not shared with most of the people present. It would usually be better to take that up with Yahweh privately rather than to abuse the occasion of public prayer to preach to the group. It is only when everyone agrees with what has been prayed, that all can, with a clear conscience, say *HalleluYah*.

Those who pray to impress men will probably receive the praise of some men, but that is all they will get. “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. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:5-6).

Our motives are very important to Yahweh. We need to ask ourselves if our purpose is to serve Yahweh’s interests, or is it selfishness and pride of some assumed spiritual superiority that initiates our words? Yahweh is the only one who can answer our spiritual needs, and we need to come to Him with humility, never with a pompous attitude.

Memorized Prayers

What about memorized prayers? Is it proper to say prayers repeatedly with little or no reflection on what is being said at the moment? The practice of prayer books may be popular for some who make prayer more a ritual than sincere conversation with Yahweh, but is it pleasing to Him?

We might ask ourselves, how would we feel if our family members and friends always spoke to us in the same memorized fashion, never altering a single word? Years of hearing the same phrases over and over, word for word, every day, would be just cause for doubting their sincerity. Our conversation with Yahweh should be at least as spontaneous and genuine from the heart as it is to our earthly acquaintances.

The idea of prayer candles and counting rosary beads for continuation or repetition of prayers is not implied anywhere in the Bible. Imagine the surprise when Catholic missionaries first visited India, Japan, and Mexico to find a common pagan practice of using rosaries.

It is a fact of history that the worship of the pagan goddess, As-tarte, about 800 BC, included the use of the rosary. The Catholic Encyclopedia admits, "In almost all countries, then, we meet with something in the nature of prayer-counters or rosary beads."

Yahshua had some very edifying words regarding the custom of imitating this pagan practice of saying the same prayers repeatedly. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matthew 6:7,8).

Thus, to copy the heathen practice of counting repetitious prayers is strictly forbidden by the Savior Himself. Let's not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking a quality prayer life could result from such exercises.

Pray After This Manner

Now, for the positive approach to prayer. “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...” (Matthew 6:9-13).

If Yahshua didn't mean for us to use this prayer repetitiously, word for word, why did He give it to His disciples? This prayer was given as an example, in response to the plea of His disciples to teach them to pray.

Luke writes the same prayer in his gospel. “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Master, *teach us to pray*, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven...” (Luke 11:1-4).

The Greek words in Luke's account are not the same as in Matthew's writing. Please compare these two accounts, Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4, in a modern translation, where words are not supplied by the translators. We find that the early disciples of Yahshua did not learn this prayer to be repeated word for word by rote.

The instruction of Yahshua here is to be a model for prayer. This was to be used as a teaching guide, just as they had asked from Him.

According to this model, our prayers should begin with praise and thanks directed to the Father.

“Our Father”, recognizes the universality of His Fatherhood of all believers.

“Hallowed be thy name” acknowledges His holiness.

Then, we are to pray for His kingdom to come as the only lasting hope for mankind.

Requesting our daily needs and the forgiveness of our sins just as we have already forgiven those who have offended us, comes after we have praised and thanked Him for blessings already received.

A great deal more could be written about the intent and meaning of this prayer, but our intention here is just to show it was given as a model for more dynamic and personal prayers.

This model is never out of style. Our needs may change from those of His first disciples, but we can still begin every prayer with thanks and for what we have already received at His hand and praise Him for His holy position. Then we can include in the balance of our prayer, the spiritual and physical needs along with the request of continual forgiveness, just as we have forgiven others.

Prayers Of Confession

When we feel the guilt of a particular sin pressing upon our minds, knowing that Yahweh has provided complete relief is very important to our continued spiritual growth. King David was confronted with this problem, just as every sincere Believer has been at some time in his life.

Yahweh’s remedy is given in David’s words of this song,

“Blessed is the man unto whom Yahweh imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer...I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will *confess my transgression unto Yahweh*; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:2-5).

To let sins knowingly go un-confessed can cause us to begin questioning our forgiveness from Yahweh. Finally, it may cause us to withdraw and become bitter against the only manner of communication to Him, prayer. Silence can be deadly.

Paul reminds the Romans of the universalness of sin and reveals Yahweh’s only cure to be through Yahshua Messiah. “For *all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of Yahweh; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Messiah Yahshua: Whom Yahweh 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 Yahweh” (Romans 3:23-25).

As Believers, we have faith that we are completely cleansed by the blood of Yahshua, not by our own righteousness. The most righteous man or woman on earth is still a sinner and should know their righteousness is as filthy rags to Yahweh.

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and *all our righteousness are as filthy rags...*” (Isaiah 64:6).

Yahweh, lovingly, looks upon believers through the blood of Yahshua and forgives them completely, when they confess their sins in the prayer of confession.

Persistence In Prayer

Yahshua said, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Just because we fail to get immediate positive answers to our prayer, doesn’t mean we should stop asking Yahweh for relief of our burdens.

Luke records a parable of the unjust judge, “There was in a city a judge, which feared not Yahweh, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not Yahweh, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And Yahweh said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not Yahweh avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” (Luke 18:2-7)

Yahweh may allow us to bear a certain burden for many years for an unknown purpose, but eventually He will lift it from us if we persist in prayer according to His will.

We may justifiably ask, is it ever within the will of Yahweh for His servants to suffer? Yes, it is! The best example of this was when Yahshua prayed to His Father, “If thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Yahshua, then, prayed more earnestly, “and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (verse 44).

The man, Yahshua, did not want to endure the agony of torture and death. His subsequent death is testimony to His faith in the providence of His Father’s will. His personal and immediate interests were to take second place to the will of the Father.

If there were times when our Savior, Yahshua, accepted the Father's superior will for His life, how much less do we have the right to question Yahweh when everything we ask fails to be answered immediately! Or, perhaps, as in Yahshua's case cited above, the answer is simply "no!" or "not now!". We must remember, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matthew 10:24).

If our Almighty Yahweh chooses to be glorified through our weakness, let's rejoice that we are able to be used of Him and continue to develop the character qualities that will turn the hearts of others to praise Him along with us. Peter and the other early disciples rejoiced when they were counted worthy to suffer to the glory of their Elohim.

Solomon expresses the proper view of persistent prayer, in his Messianic song, "And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him *continually*; and *daily shall He be Praised*" (Psalm 72:15).

Prayers For Our Food

The custom of Believers giving thanks for the food on their table and asking Yahweh to bless it before eating is a Biblical tradition, exercised by the Savior. "Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude" (Luke 9:16).

This custom was continued by early believers as shown by the apostle Paul when he was on the way to Rome to stand trial. The ship he was on was being threatened by a tempest when he, "took bread, and gave thanks to Yahweh in *presence of them all*: and when he had broken it, he began to eat" (Acts 27:35).

Later, when the unbelieving soldiers wanted to kill Paul, along with all the rest of the prisoners, they were stopped by the centurion. Maybe the sincere prayer of thanks over their food had reached the heart of this man.

A true Believer should never be afraid or ashamed to give thanks for his or her food in the presence of strangers, whether they be visiting in the home or if they be eating in a restaurant. Of course, good judgment should be exercised and not make a long exhaustive oration just to impress others of our holiness. A short sincere prayer, however, will make a greater witness of our total commitment to thanking Yahweh for His provision.

Prayer Of Intercession

The sign of mature Believers may be seen in how they pray. After conversion, it is not unusual to find new members continually praying just for themselves and their immediate family. As they continue growing in grace and knowledge, their prayers expand to the benefit of the whole body of believers.

This practice was found in the early assembly. Notice Paul's words to the Ephesian assembly; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Savior Yahshua Messiah, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:14-16). Similarly, he wrote to the Colossians, "We give thanks to Yahweh and the Father of our Savior Yahshua Messiah, *praying always for you*" (Colossians 1:3).

The Bible writers were also not too proud to ask other believers to pray for them, "*pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly*" (Hebrews 13:18).

Prayers of intercession should not stop at the assembly door. Paul pointed out with special emphasis that our prayers should include political leaders, that, if it be possible, we may lead peaceable lives.

Please notice, however, that Paul does not direct members to pray for the success of any particular governmental process as being superior to others. “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for *all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority*; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of Yahweh our Saviour” (I Timothy 2:1-3).

A careful examination of the text cited above will reveal that we are to pray for *all in authority*. That means we should pray for leaders of all human governments indiscriminately. Doing so will help us keep our focus on the reason for such an intercessory prayer, to keep the peace so the word of Yahweh might be preached and people of good will may lead peaceful lives.

One more point needs to be made concerning intercessory prayers. The custom of using dead saints to pray through to the Father is totally foreign to the Bible. In fact, Paul is very emphatic about there being only one mediator between Yahweh and man, the person of Yahshua Messiah. “For there is one Yahweh, and one mediator between Yahweh and men, the man Messiah Yahshua” (I Timothy 2:5).

Paul is reminding Timothy of Yahshua’s words, “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14). The only requirement is that the request must be within the framework of Yahweh’s will, as John later verifies, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to His will*, he heareth us” (I John 5:14).

Any and all living Believers are duty bound to act as intercessors in prayer for others, but no man except Yahshua is able to act as mediator. This then, would exclude all prayers directed to or through saints, including Mary, the mother of Yahshua, no matter how logical it may sound to some who teach people to do so.

Our Posture In Prayer

What position should we take when praying? The Bible examples vary a great deal. We have already seen where Yahshua was looking up to heaven when He blessed the food for the multitude in Luke 9:16. At another time He “fell on His face, and prayed...” (Matthew 26:39). Later that same night, He “kneeled down, and prayed...” (Luke 22:41).

To pray while standing was a custom during Yahshua’s ministry as noted in His parable in Luke 18:11 and again in His instruction to His disciples in Mark 11:25.

What are we to make of all this? Simply, that our body position is not the important thing, but Yahweh is looking upon the heart. Whether we lift our arms and look toward the heavens or bow our heads, the physical position is of little consequence, but our mental attitude must be one of humility.

With all this having been said, we want to acknowledge that “at the name of Yahshua every knee should bow...” (Philippians 2:10). It is always appropriate, though not commanded, to kneel during our private devotions.

Suggestions For Earnest Prayer

James was speaking of prayer for the sick when he said we

should pray “one for another.” Then he added, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Too often we are not fervent in our prayers.

The Greek words here suggest *strong* in prayer. For an example of strong prayer, James uses the prophet Elijah. Elijah was just as human as you and I; but when he earnestly prayed, Yahweh shut up the heavens about three and a half years. Then, when he prayed again, Yahweh gave rain. (James 5:16-18).

How can we have a more earnest prayer life? First, we should schedule a certain time for prayer. Just as we schedule a particular time to eat three meals a day, we would be wise to develop a habit of praying on a regular basis.

To accomplish this, we may elect to rise an hour or so earlier each day. Or if we have a habit of waking up during the night, why not get up and spend some time communicating with Yahweh?

When, is not as important as making this a deliberate habit. We need to be determined to allocate some time daily that is set aside for prayer. This will become our habit, yet we will want to be vigilant not to allow our prayers to become empty rituals.

How much time should we spend in our daily prayers? Some denominations teach that their members should spend one or two hours every day in prayer. In monasteries, monks spend many hours each day in prayer.

To be most candid, we must face the truth that the Bible gives no definite amount of time for personal prayer. It seems when we look for examples, we find the time was usually appropriate for the importance and the occasion.

For example, when Yahshua faced the task of choosing His twelve apostles from among the disciples, it was no accident that He spent the whole night in prayer to His Father. “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued *all night in prayer* to Yahweh. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13).

Yahshua was going to be making a major spiritual decision. He recognized the special need of Yahweh’s direction in that decision. To balance this situation, we need to quickly point out that He did not spend the entirety of every night of His life praying.

So it is with us today, when we are facing major spiritual decisions, we want to make our prayer time for that decision appropriate to its importance. It is often at times when we need prayer the most, it is most neglected. Instead of struggling alone over our anxieties, we need to seek His aid in time of trouble.

Where Should We Pray?

Not to be forgotten is where we pray. Of course, there are no limits to where Yahweh can hear our cry for help. He heard Jonah from the fish’s belly. It is of interest, however, that we find Yahshua many times going to a private place for prayer and meditation.

Earlier in the writing we noted Yahshua's advice to “enter your closet to pray.” He didn’t mean our clothes closet, although a large walk-in closet might serve that purpose, in some cases. “Closet” comes from the Greek word “tamion,” and means a private chamber, such as our bedroom or study.

If possible, we might arrange one room of our home for private

study of the Word. Such would be an ideal place to pray. Or, perhaps, if our house is shared with a large family, the bedroom or even the bathroom might double as a prayer place. The main thing we have in mind is to find a place that will best offer us privacy which allows for deep, uninterrupted meditation of Yahweh's will for our life.

We want to be mindful of the person we are addressing in our prayer. This is obviously not the place for a flippant or arrogant attitude, but with a certain boldness we approach the presence of Yahweh with reverential awe. Yet, we can be as relaxed as toddlers talking to their father, because that is precisely the position we are in.

A beautiful relationship develops between Yahweh and His child when earnest prayer becomes a way of life. Not only will we know about Yahweh, we will come to know Yahweh in a very special and personal sense.

Conclusion

Prayer is such a broad subject it cannot be fully contained in this writing, but it is hoped that some of our questions have been answered. It is with confidence of scripture we have been assured, "The eyes of Yahweh are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of Yahweh is against them that do evil" (I Peter 3:12).

As our prayers bring us closer to Yahweh, it also brings us to greater understanding of His will and greater responsibility to live in accord with what He reveals to us from His Word. Our prayer is that every reader will resolve to grow in their intensity and frequency of prayer, along with greater appreciation for their Creator and Savior.

BOOKLETS AND TAPES AVAILABLE:

UN-FORGIVENESS-THE STUMBLING BLOCK TO SALVATION

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE

THE LOVING CALL TO REPENTANCE

HOW THE SAVIOR'S NAME WAS CHANGED

THE COST OF BEING A BELIEVER

THE FASTING PRAYER

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