

R A Torrey [1856-1928] who preached in nearly every part of the English-speaking world and wrote more than 40 books on faith including several on prayer, suggested:

All real prayer begins with a conscious approach to God in our hearts. So always take time to come into God's presence and make sure you are talking to Him. This has two parts:

firstly, we give up any thought that we are acceptable to God in ourselves. We need to accept that only through Jesus Christ can we approach the Father, [see Hebrews]

Secondly, recognise that our access through Jesus is by the Holy Spirit. He is the One who leads us into God's presence. [Ephesians 2:18]

How might we do this? Torrey suggests we can come to God, in this way:

Simply be quiet.

Look up to God & ask Him to fulfil His promise & send His Holy Spirit to lead you into His presence and to make Him real to you.

Then wait and expect.

And He will come.

Expectation is vital - this is me - truly expecting God to come to us – not because we in any way compel His presence, for He is not our servant - but because He loves us, and as the best of all fathers He wants to be with us and speak with us and to help us.

A quality practised by Jesus, as we read in John 11 He prayed as he stood before the tomb of Lazarus, saying, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

And we are to pray in earnest persistence as Jesus tells us in today's reading and practised Himself, as we see in His sweating blood as He prayed the same prayer three times in Gethsemane, see Luke 22:44 and Matthew 26:39-44.

Let's Read the Bible!
Some Thoughts on Prayer
No 3 in our occasional series

Today's scripture reading, and for some weeks following, is about prayer. The Bible has a huge amount to say about prayer. It has teaching about how to pray, especially by Jesus; it contains prayers – the book of Psalms is an entire collection of prayers, as well as others throughout; it tells us what blocks our prayers being heard by God, which is less about our words than our lives, and urges us to pray at all times, in various ways, in public and in private. An active prayer life is a true faith life.

And it tells us that even reading the Bible should itself be a prayer-led event eg:

Psalm 119:18:

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Psalm 119:34

Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

And as has often been said:
pray before you read; pray as you read,
and pray about what you have read.

This will help your spirit be alert to hearing God's Word speak to you.

And as you read you may want to make a record of what God has said to you on that day.

Prayer is such a huge topic in the Bible that you might even want to jot down what it says as you read about prayer, so that by seeing the many and separate verses together you can get a better understanding of God's view of prayer/praying.

This week's passage is from Luke 18:1-8, and reads

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.

³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think,

⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.

⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

This is a parable with a clear meaning. We are to pray and not give up. It is expressed in the example of a Judge and an unjustly treated widow.

The Bible has some very clear statements about the need to care for widows. This is not simply moral duty. It is a God-given command. And obedience or disobedience reveals the truth of your true relationship with God, regardless of your religious activity, Isaiah 1, for example, makes it utterly clear that when God's people do not stand up for widows it is one reason why He does not hear their prayer:

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. [Isaiah 1:15-17 NIV]

Everyone listening to the story would have known this, but they would also have known that widows were powerless & were often ignored.

Through Christian-inspired and based social concern we live in a welfare society. Does that mean God's command for His people to care for widows no longer applies?

What do you do when you hear of people suffering injustice?

What does Jesus want us to know about God?

What do you think Jesus means, by His saying:
when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

What is Jesus saying to you in this event? How will you respond to that?