



Operation Hannah

A Prayer Ministry for Mothers

A Ministry of Youth for Christ International



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Dedication

This book is dedicated
to all children everywhere,
both great and small,
 black,
 white,
 yellow,
 or
 brown,
who, if not for
the faithful,
persistent
prayers
of mothers,
might never call upon the
Name of the Lord
and be saved.

Publishing Information

Hannah's Gift
Treasures from 1 Samuel

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**Operation Hannah
A Prayer Ministry
for Mothers**

What is Operation Hannah?

Operation Hannah is a nondenominational prayer movement dedicated to the mobilization and preparation of mothers who will birth in prayer a new generation of young people who will be characterized by power in prayer, boldness in evangelism, passion in social involvement, and godliness in lifestyle.

Objectives of Operation Hannah

Through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the saving work of the Holy Spirit and the concerted prayers of mothers, a community of youth people will be:

- Converted to Christ
- Consecrated for Christ
- Commissioned by Christ

How to Become a “Hannah”

1. Commit to pray for a minimum of fifteen minutes on a daily basis for your children as well as for the children within your nation.
2. Fill out the card found in booklet and return it to its appropriate address.
3. Join other “Hannahs” in your area on a once a month basis, praying in agreement for your children and those of others.

How to Become a “Local Coordinator”

The Local Coordinator should be a committed “Hannah” who models prayer, who leads an exemplary Christian life, who has a passion to train, motivate and challenge others to invest in the lives of youth through prayer and who desires to partner with churches to see “Operation Hannah” become a reality.

1. To apply for Local Coordinator, contact by letter: (Type in YFC’s address)

The YFC program will send you an application that should be filled out and returned. Upon receiving your application, it will be reviewed and prayed over. You will receive a phone call or a reply by mail.

Responsibilities of a “Local Coordinator”

1. Organizing periodic meetings of “Hannahs” in your city for the purpose of praying together, discussing ideas, encouragement, etc.
2. Partnering with the Body of Christ.
 - Meeting with pastors of churches to share the vision.
 - Asking for a meeting with mothers in the church.
 - Recruiting mothers from the church.
3. Interceding for the “Hannahs.”

4. Communicating with the Director of “Operation Hannah” by sending a bi-monthly letter testifying of answers to prayer.
5. Facilitating training seminars for the purpose of training mothers to pray effectively.
6. Collecting commitment forms from mothers who wish to join. (This will provide you a list of names for the purpose of intercession. See Step 3.)

About Hannah’s Gift

Why was Hannah’s pain intense? What compelled her to pray night and day? Why did she never give up until God answered? Why . . .

There are more questions than there are answers. All that we know of Hannah is found in slightly less than two chapters. This story of a mother’s prayers and her willingness to give back to God what she promised, prepared the way for one of Israel’s greatest leaders. The story may have gone differently except that Hannah remembered her vow made to God years before and kept it.

Hannah’s legacy lives on through her treasured prayers, which continue to resonate in the hearts of mothers everywhere. For Hannah knew both grief and victory, two things every mother can relate to. Even in grief, Hannah acknowledged that the source of her strength, the source of all blessing, and the source of her adoration was the Lord. Her challenge continues to cry out from the pages of Scripture for a simple and pure devotion to the Lord.

For the first time in Scripture, Hannah introduces two significant names of God. In Stanley A. Ellisen’s book, *Knowing God*, he states, “The first is ‘the LORD of hosts’ (1 Samuel 1:11), a designation used nearly 300 times in the Old Testament. As Moses sang of the Lord as a ‘man of war’ and Joshua saw Him as a ‘Commander of the army of the LORD,’ (Exodus 15:3; Joshua 5:14), Hannah’s prayer states, ‘The LORD kills and makes alive’ (1 Samuel 2:6), adverting to His almightiness.

Hannah also referred to God’s king as ‘His anointed,’ (1 Samuel 2:10), a term interpreted as ‘Messiah,’ in Daniel 9:25-26, and the derivation of the name ‘Christ’ in the New Testament. This anointing spoke of the Spirit’s power by which men of God and even the Messiah performed God’s service.”

In Richard Foster’s book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, Foster writes on the many styles of prayer. Hannah’s prayers mirror several of the pleas and praises Foster describes in his book. Five of these prayer styles are:

1. Simple Prayer: Our needs, our wants, our concerns dominate the prayer experience.
2. Prayer of the Forsaken. Here we experience real spiritual desolation. We feel abandoned by friends, spouse, and God.
3. Prayer of Relinquishment. We begin to enter into a grace-filled releasing of our will and a flowing into the will of the Father. It is a

4. Prayer of Relinquishment that moves us from struggling to releasing.
5. Covenant Prayer. At the altar of Covenant Prayer we vow unswerving allegiance; we make high resolves, we promise holy obedience.
6. Prayer of Adoration. Adoration is the spontaneous yearning of the heart to worship, honor; magnify, and bless God.

Hannah experienced each prayer style within the few short chapters of 1 Samuel. Her longing for a child dominated her prayer life for years. This is Simple Prayer. In bitterness of soul, Hannah prayed. This is Prayer of the Forsaken. Even before God answered, Hannah made a vow to the Lord that if He would give her a son, she would give him back to Him. (Not until Hannah relinquished ownership of this child did God perform a miracle.) This is Covenant Prayer. Upon leaving Samuel with Eli, Hannah entered into a “grace-filled releasing of her will and the flowing into His.” This is Prayer of Relinquishment. And finally, Hannah prayed the Prayer of Adoration that flowed from a heart of great loss to one whose heart was full of adoration.

Hannah’s story is so short that many questions continue to come to mind. Could it be that God was looking for a woman who would relinquish a boy-child to Him at this time in history? Could it be? Could it be that God closed Hannah’s womb so that a miracle could happen? Could it be that Hannah was praying in the will of her Father all along for this child?

Most definitely! When we arrive at the point of relinquishment, when the grace-filled releasing of our will becomes the flowing into His, expect a miracle from the heart of the Almighty.

Introduction

Prayer is a hard discipline to master. Knowing that I should pray and do not reminds me of Paul’s struggle when he says, “For what I want to do I do not do.” (Romans 7:15b)

I believe for most of us, we don’t pray because we don’t see answers to our prayers. I found some reasons our prayers go unanswered scribbled on a piece of paper stuck within the pages of my Bible.

1. Praying incorrectly. (James 4:3)
2. Doubt and unbelief. (Matthew 21:22)
3. Unforgiveness. (Matthew 6:12; 14-15)
4. Unrepented sin. (Isaiah 59:2)
5. Disobedience. (Luke 18:1)
6. Fear (Proverbs 29:25)
7. Self-reliance (Psalm 86:1; 7)
8. Apart from Christ. (John 15:7)
9. Denying His power to overcome. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Prayer is not an argument with God
to persuade Him to move things
our way, but an exercise by which
we are enabled by His Spirit
to move ourselves His way.
Leonard Ravenhill

Welcome, each of you, to Hannah's Gift. It is my prayer that Hannah's Gift will challenge you to utter dependence on Him, a greater intimacy with Him, and an absolute release to Him as you take your child to God in prayer.

Hannah's story depicts a life of victory through great travail and leaves us wanting to know more. Did Hannah continue praying for Samuel even after she had left him with Eli? You bet!

With great love from a mother to a mother, Linda

A Mother's Prayer

I will take my child [even yet conceived],
and present him before the Lord and he will live
there always and forever, ministering to the Holy One,
the Magnificent One, his Lord God.

From conception, he was Yours, O Lord.
By You, his days were ordained and written
in Your book. Might each word written be fulfilled.

May Your words be his delight; may Your statutes
be hidden always in his heart so he might not sin
against You. May the words of his mouth and the
meditations of his heart be always pleasing to You, his Lord.

For You will be his portion, only You.
For the cry of "Abba, Daddy" will be familiar
to this one for he will know You, will want You,
will hunger after You, will thirst after You,
will chase after You, until You are found.

With every passing day, this child, this gift,
will in turn love You, his Lord God,
with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and
will love his neighbor as himself.

And when his days come to an end and this child has

fulfilled the purposes of God for his generation,
may this child look back in awe at the souls won
to the Kingdom by the great grace of his Lord God,
and one single soul poured out to overflowing.
In Jesus' Name this mother prays. Amen

1 Samuel 1 and 2 Studying Hannah

1 Samuel 1

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always."

"Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

1 Samuel 2:1-11

Then Hannah prayed and said:

"My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.

"There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

"Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.

"The bows of the warriors are broken,

but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry hunger no more.
She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

“The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.

“For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's;
upon them he has set the world.
He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.

“It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.

1 Samuel 2:18-21

But Samuel was ministering before the LORD - a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, “May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.” Then they would go home. And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

1 Samuel 2:26

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with me.

1 Samuel 3:1-21

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called

Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family - from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

"What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

1 Samuel 4:1

And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

Studying Hannah

In the first chapter of Samuel, what unfilled longing in Hannah's life occupied every waking moment? Why do you think childbirth was so very important to Hannah?

Sometimes there are neither words nor actions that can quiet a soul. Did Hannah find comfort in the words or actions of her precious husband?

Where did she turn to find comfort and answers?

Have you been in desperate situations, where if God didn't move, there would be no hope? Explain.

Hannah's anguish had become great; her pain unbearable. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept and prayed. Note the words she used to acknowledge God in 1 Samuel 1 verse 11. What does Hannah's choice of words show us about her relationship with God?

What changed from verse 7?

Note Hannah's vow made in verse 11. To vow means to make "an earnest promise that binds one to a specified act or mode of behavior." Each scripture below gives insight into

vow-making in the Hebrew culture. Write a brief sentence concerning its relevance to vow-making.

Genesis 28:20

Leviticus 27:9-27

Deuteronomy 12:6, 11

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

Psalms 22:25

Psalms 61:8

Psalms 116:12-19

Proverbs 20:25

Malachi 1:14

Describe the vow made by Hannah in 1 Samuel 1 verse 11. Did her solemn promise to give the boy-child to the Lord for all the days of his life move the heart of God?

A miracle was in the making. The Lord was to use the barrenness of a woman to prove his power, purpose and care over a nation. "It is God . . . He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted." (Job 9:10) Are you in need of a miracle? Why not pour out your soul to the Lord?

God intervened in the history of a nation. Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, "Because I asked the Lord for him." The Lord answered and gave; soon Hannah would have to give back. As Hannah cradled the boy-child in her arms, what might have gone through her mind?

“In Hannah’s culture a limit was placed on women who made vows (Numbers 30:3-9). Husbands and fathers were legally responsible for their wives and children and could overrule vows made by those in their guardianship” (Judith Couchman). Did Elkanah overrule Hannah’s vow? In verse 23, what did Elkanah say?

After Samuel was weaned (2 or 3 years old), Hannah brought Samuel to Eli to fulfill the vow made several years before. “Hannah kissed Samuel one last time and placed her child’s chubby fingers in Eli’s wrinkled palm. When the boy and the old man clasped hands, Hannah waited for her heart to tear in two. By giving up Samuel, she was losing at least half, if not all, of her soul. Instead she felt inexplicably calm . . . When Samuel’s small body disappeared behind a door, Elkanah pulled Hannah to his chest to comfort her, as he’d done countless times before. Hannah breathed from deep within, and for a few moments husband and wife held each other without words.

Then Hannah whispered, ‘Elkanah, I want to pray. I need to spend time with God’ . . .

As Hannah kneeled to pray, not far from the doorpost where Eli had sat a few years ago, she waited again for tears to well up. Instead, she felt surprised by the joy within - a spurt at first, then a splattering fountain, then a rushing sensation so strong, she stood to her feet. Filled with the presence of God, she clapped her hands and sang: (Judith Couchman)

‘My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.
There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.’”

In the second chapter of 1 Samuel, read the prayer of adoration found in verses 1-10. Why do you think Hannah was able to worship instead of weep?

Reread the prayer and begin to list names that are attributed to God.

Through the years Hannah gave birth to five more children. Does obedience bring the blessing of God? Find scriptures that back this statement.

In verse 20, why is it that Eli gave a blessing to Elkanah and Hannah?

The Scriptures say of Samuel that he “grew up in the presence of the Lord” (verse 21b) and that he “continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men” (verse 26). Have you considered praying these things into the life of your children? Find Scriptures that would speak of the “favor of God and men” and the “blessing of the presence of God upon a life.” Write a prayer using the Scriptures.

Upon examining a cross-section of Hannah’s life, we have experienced a fresh encounter with the God of miracles, the God whose Name is the Lord of Hosts (Jehovah Sabaoth) adverting to His almightiness; whose Name is Elohim (Creator) adverting to His omnipotence and sovereignty and supreme power, the God whose timing is never slow, the God who hears prayers and is attentive and responsive, the God who is near to the brokenhearted, the God who uses the barrenness of a woman to birth a prophet and kingmaker, the God who does all things well.

. . . from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
(Psalm 90:2b)

As we continue to study and glean from the Scriptures the prayers of others, may we lay hold of God in a greater light:

I keep asking
that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the glorious Father,
may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,
so that you may know Him better.
(Ephesians 1:17)

Chapter One: Friends of God

That I may
perfectly
love Thee
and worthily
praise Thee.

Author Unknown

Friends of God

God is no respecter of persons. In Acts 10:34-35, Peter states, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."

Word Treasure

verse 10:34 (King James): respecter of persons, prosopoleptes: Strong's #4381: A receiver of a face, one who takes sides, showing favoritism, exhibiting bias, showing partiality, treating one person better than another.

God's love and grace are available to all for "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43). He is no respecter of persons. Everyone who believes become a child of God. And everyone who believes on His Name become FRIENDS of God IF they do what He commands. (John 5:13-15)

The next several pages are devoted to the "near friends" of God, who through their obedience, found a special place in the heart of God.

Hannah and Samuel: The Gift of Giving Back
Samuel . . . "a man who has God for His treasure,
who had all things in One."

Abraham and Isaac: The Gift of Letting Go
Abraham . . . "a man who had everything but
possessed nothing."

Deborah: The Gift of Pressing In
Deborah . . . whose perspective was not clouded
by the word "impossible" but by the Word of God.

Hannah and Samuel: The Gift of Giving Back

Hannah was a desperate women caught in a crisis of belief. The Lord had shut her womb. Hannah's desire for a baby consumed her until it no longer could be contained. Her longing spilled out through her tears, through her words, her actions, her prayers. The emotional pain was tremendous; the shame unbearable; the longing unquenchable. But such is a story from which miracles happen . . .

This is Hannah's story, a gift to us.

Elkanah, a Levite, prepared his family once again to make the yearly trek to Shiloh where they would worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty. Elkanah had two wives; one's name was Hannah, the other Peninnah. To Peninnah many children were given but the

Lord had closed the womb of Hannah. And because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. Year after year this went on.

Barrenness

“a curse from God”

In the Old Testament times, “the Israelites saw children as a particular blessing from the Lord, recognizing His power to open or close a woman's womb. Women, who couldn't bear children, were considered subfemale, unable to fulfill their divine purpose on earth.”

Excerpt from *Women of the Bible*, Ann Spangler and Jean Syswerde

While worshipping God at Shiloh, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. “How long, O Lord, until you answer this prayer of mine: O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” Eli, the priest, observed Hannah's lips moving but her voice was not heard. Assuming she was drunk, Eli confronted Hannah. Hannah couldn't take any more ridicule. She spoke up and said, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” With that, Eli blessed her and prayed that God would grant Hannah what she asked of Him.

Eli, the priest, observed Hannah's lips moving but her voice was not heard. Assuming she was drunk, Eli confronted Hannah. Hannah couldn't take any more ridicule. She spoke up and said, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” With that, Eli blessed her and prayed that God would grant Hannah what she asked of Him.

Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord, and then returned home. Elkanah lay with his wife Hannah and the Lord remembered her. “The Lord remembered her” does not imply that He had forgotten her but that He was now bringing the answer to the prayers of Hannah, and the fulfillment of His purposes in child named Samuel, “heard of God”.)

Hannah gave birth to a boy-child. After Samuel was weaned, Hannah fulfilled her vow to the Lord and took the young boy to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. After sacrificing to the Lord there, she brought Samuel to Eli and said to him, “As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.”

What Hannah thought would be a time of great mourning, instead was a time of great joy. Her sorrow turned into praise to her Lord, her Rock.

“My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high . . .
There is no one holy like the Lord;

there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.”

Samuel stayed and ministered to the Lord under Eli the priest. Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The Lord came one night to Samuel and began to speak, calling out his name. Not recognizing who was calling, Samuel went to Eli thrice to see if it was him calling. Eli finally recognized that it was the Lord calling Samuel. He told Samuel to go and lie down and if the Voice speaks again say, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” And so it was that the Lord begin to reveal Himself to Samuel through the word.

Samuel continued to grow in both stature and in favor with the Lord and with men. Samuel, “a man who has God for His treasure, who had all things in One.”

A Mother's Prayer of Relinquishment

I release to You, O Lord, this great and generous gift You have given. I present him to You and may this child always and forever minister to You, His Lord, and know You greatly. Amen.

Abraham and Isaac: The Gift of Letting Go

Abraham was old when Isaac was born, old enough to have been his grandfather, and the child became at once the delight and idol of his heart. From the moment he first stooped to take the tiny form awkwardly in his arms, he was an eager love slave of his son. God went out of His way to comment on the strength of this affection. And it is not hard to understand. The baby represented everything sacred to his father's heart: the promises of God, the covenants, the hopes of the years and the long messianic dream. As he watched him grow from babyhood to young manhood, the heart of the old man was knit closer and closer with the life of his son, till at last the relationship bordered upon the perilous. It was then that God stepped in to save both father and son from the consequences of an uncleansed love.

“Take now thy son,” said God to Abraham, “thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Genesis 22:2). The sacred writer spares us a close-up of the agony that night on the slopes near Beersheba when the aged man had it out with his God, but respectful imagination may view in awe the bent form wrestling convulsively alone under the stars. Possibly not again until One greater than Abraham wrestled in the Garden of Gethsemane did such mortal pain visit a human soul. If only the man himself might have been allowed to die. That would have been a thousand times easier, for he was old now, and to die would have been no great ordeal for one who had walked so long with God. Besides, it would have been a last, sweet pleasure to let his dimming vision rest upon the figure of his stalwart son who would live to carry on the Abrahamic line and fulfill in himself the promises of God made long before in Ur of the Chaldees.

How should he slay the lad? Even if he could get the consent of his wounded and protesting heart, how could he reconcile the act with the promise, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called”? This was Abraham’s trial by fire, and he did not fail in the crucible. While the stars still shone like sharp white points above the tent where the sleeping Isaac lay, and long before the gray dawn had begun to lighten the east, the old saint had made up his mind. He would offer his son as God had directed him to do, and then trust God to raise him from the dead. This, says the writer of Hebrews, was the solution his aching heart found sometime in the dark night, and he rose “early in the morning” to carry out the plan. It is beautiful to see that, while he erred as to God’s method, he had correctly sensed the secret of His great heart. And the solution accords well with the New Testament Scriptures, “Whosoever will lose . . . for my sake shall find” (Matthew 16:25).

God let the suffering old man go through with it up to the point where He knew there would be no retreat, and then forbade him to lay a hand upon the boy. To the wondering patriarch He now says in effect, “It’s all right, Abraham. I never intended that you should actually slay the lad. I only wanted to remove him from the temple of your heart that I might reign unchallenged there. I wanted to correct the perversion that existed in your love. Now, you may have the boy, sound and well. Take him and go back to your tent. Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.”

Then heaven opened and a voice was heard saying to him, “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:16-18).

The old man of God lifted his head to respond to the Voice, and stood there on the mount strong and pure and grand, a man marked out by the Lord for special treatment, a friend and favorite of the Most High. Now he was a man wholly surrendered, a man utterly obedient, a man who possessed nothing. He had concentrated his all in the person of his dear son and God had taken it from him. God could have begun out on the margin of Abraham’s life and worked inward to the center. He chose rather to cut quickly to the heart and have it over in one sharp act of separation. It hurt cruelly, but it was effective.

Abraham . . . “a man who had everything
but possessed nothing.”

A Mother’s Prayer of Repentance

For my child is a gift I have held tightly to. My hands are clinched, my heart bleeding, yet I know now I must give this child over to You, O gracious God, so that You only, hold the highest place of honor in my heart. Root out any treasure I have held on to tightly. Come and dwell in its place, my Lord.

Deborah: The Gift of Pressing In

Deborah, whose name means Honeybee, was both prophetess and judge to Israel. She arose to position at a time when the northern tribes of Israel were oppressed by the domination of the Canaanites and the spirit-crushing subjection of its king, Jabin. God appointed her to be a “mother” for His people who “were beaten down as a result of their disobedience and their failure to remain true to their God in the Promised Land” (Spirit Filled Life Bible). But God in His mercy brought this woman onto the scene, a woman distinguished for her humility, wisdom, and willingness to serve.

In all actuality, Deborah’s service as judge was laborious as well as time consuming, yet Deborah found time to listen for God’s voice. “When, over the course of years she had proven faithful in this important calling, God called her to an even greater mission: deliverance of His people from Canaanite subjection” (Spirit Filled Life Bible).

Judges 4

After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim. Because he had nine hundred iron chariots and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the LORD for help.

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’”

Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”

“Very well,” Deborah said, “I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman.” So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh, where he summoned Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses’ brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaananim near Kedesh.

When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, Sisera gathered together his nine hundred iron chariots and all the men with him, from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River.

Then Deborah said to Barak, “Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?” So Barak went down Mount Tabor,

followed by ten thousand men. At Barak's advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left.

Sisera, however, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there were friendly relations between Jabin king of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite.

Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she put a covering over him.

"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

"Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say 'No.'"

But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple - dead.

On that day God subdued Jabin, the Canaanite king, before the Israelites.

And the hand of the Israelites grew stronger and stronger against Jabin, the Canaanite king, until they destroyed him.

On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

"When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves - praise the LORD!

Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I will sing to the LORD, I will sing; I will make music to the LORD, the God of Israel.

O LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the roads were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel. When they chose new gods, war came to the city gates, and not a shield or spear

was seen among forty thousand in Israel. My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD!

You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road, consider the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the righteous acts of the LORD, the righteous acts of his warriors in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the city gates. 'Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, O Barak! Take captive your captives, O son of Abinoam.'

Then the men who were left came down to the nobles; the people of the LORD came to me with the mighty. Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek; Benjamin was with the people who followed you. From Makir captains came down, from Zebulun those who bear a commander's staff. The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; yes, Issachar was with Barak, rushing after him into the valley. In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart. Why did you stay among the campfires to hear the whistling for the flocks? In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart. Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan. And Dan, why did he linger by the ships? Asher remained on the coast and stayed in his coves. The people of Zebulun risked their very lives; so did Naphtali on the heights of the field.

Kings came, they fought; the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo, but they carried off no silver, no plunder. From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away, the age old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong! Then thundered the horses' hoofs - galloping, galloping go his mighty steeds. 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD. 'Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty.'

Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women. He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk. Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay. At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell dead.

Through the window peered Sisera's mother; behind the lattice she cried out, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?' The wisest of her ladies answer her; indeed, she keeps saying to herself, 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoils: a girl or two for each man, colorful garments as plunder for Sisera, colorful garments embroidered, highly embroidered garments for my neck - all this as plunder?'

So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But may they who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength." Then the land had peace forty years.

Deborah, whose prospective was not clouded
by the word "impossible"

but by the Word of God.

A Mother's Prayer for Pressing In

My Lord, I give You permission to enlarge my heart to embrace my nation's youth. Just as Deborah was called to "mother" a nation, I too desire the same only from a stance of humility down on my knees. I am a willing! Increase my faith to believe You for wonders that cannot be fathomed; miracles that cannot be counted (Job 9:10); souls that cannot be numbered and let it be for Your glory and honor and praise only. In Jesus' Name. Amen

Chapter Two: The Art of Personal Prayer

The heart
of prayer
is not to alter
God's will
but to find it.
-Sam Shoemaker

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."
(John 15:5-8)

"Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."
(John 15:16b)

Abiding in Christ and remaining in His Word is a prerequisite to "asking with the idea of receiving." Abide in Greek means "to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): - continue, be present, remain, stand, tarry. When we abide in Christ and in His Word our prayers are effective (John 15:7), our fruitbearing becomes God-glorifying (John 15:8) and our joy is made complete (John 15:11).

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

In Luke 11 verse 1, Jesus is praying and his disciples are either waiting for him or are entering into prayer themselves. One of His disciples has become curious. He watches and listens to the words that come when Jesus prays to His Father. He quickly remembers Jesus addressing a group of Jews saying, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19). The disciple might have thought, "How then

could Jesus see what the Father is doing if not to pray and ask that His Father's will be made known?"

Countless requests had been asked of Jesus by His disciples. But for two years one request remained, "Lord, teach us to pray." After years of modeling prayer before His followers, someone asked. Oh, how Jesus must have been encouraged by those five words! For He knew very well that this teaching would be vital to their relationship with the Father. And so . . . Jesus began "This, then, is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."
(Matthew 6:9-13)

Prayer Model: The Lord's Prayer

First, we are to talk to Father about the Father - His person, His program, and His purpose: "Hallowed be Your Name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done." Then we speak to the Father about His family - the children's need for provision, pardon, protection: "Give us day by day our daily bread, Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us, and Do not lead us into temptation."

God's Paternity: "Our Father"

But as many as received Him [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.
(John 1:12)

When Christians bow before God and call Him Father, they are acknowledging that at the heart of the universe there is not only ultimate power but ultimate love. The address "Our Father in heaven," not only recognizes the intimacy that we have with God as our Father, but it also speaks of the awe we should have as we come to Him in prayer. Jesus is saying that this One to whom we come as Father is the sovereign God of heaven, the God of all power, the God of all authority.

The Bible keeps the tension between intimacy and awe. The writer of Hebrews says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (4:16). The fact that we come to a throne should fill us with awe. But because it is a throne of grace, it is approachable. The sovereign, almighty God of the universe has allowed us, because of Jesus Christ, to approach Him in prayer and address Him as Father.

God's Person: "Hallowed Be Your Name"

And those who know
Your Name
will put their trust in You.
(Psalm 9:10)

When we pray, "Hallowed be Your name," we are talking about the character and person of God. To hallow means "to sanctify, to set apart, to make special." When we say, "hallowed be Your name," we are praying that God may be God to us, that He will be set apart in our prayers in such a way that it will be clear that we reverence God.

Nature (Character, Essence) of God by Charlene Adams

Sovereign:

God is Supreme Being of the Universe. He has absolute authority and volition. (Psalm 83:18; Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 12:11)

Righteous:

God is absolute righteousness and perfect goodness, free from sin, perfect in His character and Person, as well as in His attitudes and actions. (Isaiah 51:8; 1 John 2:1; Jeremiah 23:6)

Just:

God is just in every commandment He gives and every decision He makes. It is impossible for Him to be unfair with anyone. (Deuteronomy. 32:4; 11 Timothy 4:8; John 16:8)

Love

God is eternal, unchangeable love. He does not depend on emotion to sustain or express His love. (1 John 4:8; John 13:34, 35; Romans 5:5)

Eternal

God is! He is absolute existence, the self-existing One, the great I AM (Exodus 3:14), who has neither beginning nor end. (1 John 5:11; Revelation 1:8)

Omniscient

God is all-knowing. Infinite in wisdom and understanding. (Job 37:16; John 18:4; Isaiah 11:2)

Omnipresent

God is everywhere. (Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Matthew 28:20; Psalm 139:7)

Omnipotent

God is all-powerful, unlimited in His ability and in His authority. (Romans 1:20; Romans 1:4; Acts 1:8)

Immutable

God is unalterable. He is neither capable of nor susceptible to change; therefore, He is absolute stability. (James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8; John 14:6)

Veracious

God is absolute truth. He says what He means and means what He says. (John 7:28; John 14:6; 1 John 5:6)

Names of God (Excerpts from "Names of God" by Nathan Stone)

A name imposes some limitation. It means that an object or person is this and not that, is here and not there. And if the Heaven of heavens cannot contain God, how can a name describe Him? Even so, the Old Testament contains a number of names and compound names for God which reveal Him in some aspect of His character and dealings with mankind.

Adonai (Lord, Master)

Confirms the idea of a trinity and is translated Lord, signifying ownership or mastership and indicates the truth that God is owner of each member of the human family, and He consequently claims the unrestricted obedience of all.

El

Mighty, strong, prominent, omnipotence, transcendence. The word "El" itself is translated God and frequently indicates, in circumstances, the great power of God.

Elohim (Creator)

Contains the idea of creative and governing power, of omnipotence and sovereignty; the supreme power and glory of His Being. Elohim as a name is usually given in the Scriptures to the ever blessed Trinity by which they represent themselves as under the obligation of an oath to perform certain conditions.

El-Shaddai (The All-Sufficient One, Almighty God)

As a beneficent and bountiful Bestower of powers, gifts, blessings, and fruitfulness for service. Shaddai signifies one who nourishes, supplies, satisfies. When connected with the word for God, El, it then becomes the One mighty to nourish, satisfy, supply.

Jehovah (The Self-Existent One, LORD)

Reveals God as the eternal, self-existent One, the God of revelation, the God of moral and spiritual attributes - righteousness, holiness, love and therefore of redemption, the God who stands in special covenant relation to Israel in contrast to Elohim, the general name of God in relation to all nations.

In the names below, there is a progressive revelation of Jehovah meeting every need as it arises in the experience of His redeemed people - saving, sustaining, strengthening, sanctifying; and not only for the redeemed of that day but for God's saints in all ages.

Jehovah-jireh (God will provide)

Jehovah's great provision for man's redemption in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jehovah-M'Kaddesh (The Lord who Sanctifies)

The word kaddesh is "to set apart or separate." The idea is most nearly rendered by the words sanctify or hallow, and the word holy stands for that which is hallowed or set apart. It is the glory and beauty of His holiness that God wishes to impart.

A Scottish divine writes, 'It is the balance . . . of all the attributes of Deity. Power without holiness would degenerate into cruelty; omniscience without holiness would become craft; justice without holiness would degenerate into revenge; and goodness without holiness would be passionate and intemperate fondness doing mischief rather than accomplishing good.'

Jehovah-nissi (The Lord My Banner)

A banner, in ancient times, was not necessarily a flag such as we use nowadays. The word here for banner is translated variously pole, ensign, standard, and among the Jews it is also a word for miracle. As an ensign or standard it was a signal to God's people to rally to Him. It stood for His cause, His battle. It was a sign of deliverance, of salvation. Jehovah is the banner of our warfare, and God's mighty power in redemption.

Jehovah-rohi (The Lord My Shepherd)

Rohi means to feed or lead to pasture, as a shepherd does his flock. Jehovah-rohi is not only the Shepherd of His people, He is my shepherd. As the God of the individual He is intensely personal.

Jehovah-ropeh (The Lord That Heals)

Rophe means to restore, to heal, to cure, or a physician, not only in the physical sense but in the moral and spiritual sense also. The will, and the power, and the longing are present in Jehovah to heal.

Jehovah-shalom (The Lord Is Peace)

Jehovah in His own person is perfect peace. This He must be if He is to be the source of peace to mankind.

Jehovah-shammah (The Lord Is There)

Jehovah-shammah is the promise and pledge of the completion of that purpose in man's final rest and glory, for man's end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Jehovah-tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness)

Tsidkenu signifies God's dealings with men under the ideas of righteousness, justification, and acquittal. The manifestation and provision of that righteousness of Jehovah which alone can make men acceptable to God was fully realized in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Elohim revealed God to us as the triune Creator
and Sovereign of the universe, of life, and of all nations.
As Jehovah, He was seen as the eternal, self-existent God
of revelation and especially as the God of His covenant people.
The name El-Shaddai revealed Him as mighty, sufficient, and satisfying One. As
Adonai, He was seen as our sovereign Lord,
the Master of our lives and service. Jehovah-jireh revealed Him
as the One who provides the sacrificial lamb of our redemption.
Jehovah-rophe revealed Him as the Healer
of life's sicknesses and sorrows.
In Jehovah-nissi He was seen as the standard of our victory
in life's conflicts. As Jehovah-M'Kaddesh He sets His people
apart for His own peculiar possession and to His holy service.
As Jehovah-shalom, He is the God of our peace.
And as Jehovah-tsidkenu He Himself is that righteousness
to His people which alone is the basis of their justification
and acceptance. As Jehovah-rohi, He is our Shepherd.
Jehovah-shammah revealed Him as the promise
of man's final rest and glory.

God's Program: "Your Kingdom Come"

The second request that we direct to the Father about the Father is not only devoted to the person of God but also to the program of God. The second request is "Your Kingdom come." Jesus was speaking here about His future messianic reign on the earth. So when we pray, "Your Kingdom come," we look toward that time when God's messianic kingdom prophesied throughout the Old Testament will be established by Jesus' return to earth. As we pray, we direct our gaze to the day when the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

Thy kingdom come . . .

The petitioner asks for the establishment of God's rule, not only in its consummation in the age to come, but in lives and in situations now.

From the Spirit Filled Life Bible

When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we also ask for something else. We plead that on the small bit of earth we occupy now, we will submit our will to God's will. When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we acknowledge God's right to rule all people, including us. Unless I am sufficiently concerned about God's sovereignty to make my life His throne, and make it my daily purpose to bring every individual whose life I touch into willing and glad submission to Him, I cannot pray these words with integrity. We dare not pray for His rule over others unless we honestly desire His rule over us.

God's Purpose: "Your Will Be Done"

We are to pray for the person of God, that His name will be hallowed; for the program of God, that His kingdom will come; and for the purpose of God, that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer is not an argument with God
to persuade Him to move things our way,
but an exercise by which we are enabled
by His Spirit to move ourselves His way.

Leonard Ravenhill

Praying for His will to be done provides us a foundation for our prayers. We must recognize the importance of conforming our will to His will. Prayer is not getting God to do my will; it is asking that God's will be done in my life, my family, my business, and in my relationships, as it is done in heaven.

God's Provision: "Give Us Our Daily Bread"

When Jesus taught us to pray, He gave us a comprehensive blueprint to follow. The first three requests deal with God's glory. The last three requests deal with the family of God. While the petitions to the Father talk about His Name, His kingdom, and His will, the last three requests have to do with us: "Give us, forgive us, and lead us." After we have prayed for what is cosmic and eternal, we are to pray about that which is temporal.

The focus of the request is for daily bread. The word bread refers to the food that sustains our bodies. In the larger sense, bread refers to all that we must have to live. Our Father in heaven concerns Himself with the items on a grocery list. Food for our next meal matters to Him.

The word translated "daily" is found only once in the Bible. Strong's defines the Greek word "daily" to mean "subsistence, i.e. needful".

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

When we pray, "Give us our daily bread," we ask for others in the family as well as ourselves. If I pray this prayer in sincerity, it delivers me from selfishness and hoarding. If the Father supplies me with two loaves and my brother or sister with none, I understand that God has indeed answered our prayers. My extra loaf is not for storing, but for sharing.

God's Pardon: "Forgive Us Our Sins"

After we ask the Father for provision, we ask for pardon: “Forgive us our sins.” Forgive follows give.

Augustine labeled this request “the terrible petition” because if we pray, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us,” and at the same time harbor an unforgiving spirit, we are actually asking God not to forgive us.

Think of how the confession of sin works. If I honestly pray for forgiveness, then I revise my estimate of myself downward on the scale, and I admit my own sin and guilt. Without that, I can regard myself as so important, so dignified, so honorable that it would be unthinkable to forgive anyone who dared offend someone as righteous as I. That is self-righteousness.

To sin is human, to forgive divine.
We are never closer to God’s grace than when we admit our sin and cry out for pardon.
We are never more like God than when, for Christ’s sake,
we extend forgiveness fully and freely to those
who have sinned against us.
Haddon W. Robinson

God’s Protection: “Do Not Lead Us Into Temptation”

Why should we have to ask God not to lead us into temptation? To ask Him to keep us out of temptation would be more understandable. Professor D.A. Carson suggests that Jesus is using a figure of speech called a litotes, which expresses something positive by negating its opposite. For example, if I say, “This is no small matter,” I mean it is a big matter. When we pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” then, we are really crying out, “Keep me away from temptation.” We are praying, “Don’t let Satan ambush me. Don’t let the foe of our souls catch us in his trap.” We are recognizing that God has the power to lead us past all the lures to sin that threaten us; and we are asking, “If the opportunity to sin presents itself, grant that I will not have the desire. If the desire springs up within me, grant that I will not have the opportunity.”

When tempted, no one should say,
“God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;
but each one is tempted when,
by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived,
it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is
full-grown, gives birth to death.
James 1:13-15

When we pray “Deliver us from the evil one,” we recognize Satan’s power, affirm our weakness, and plead for the greater power of God.

God's Preeminence: "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory"

The Lord's Prayer, as we commonly recite it, concludes with a trumpet blast of praise. "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Since those words seem like an appropriate and fitting way for the prayer to end, it is somewhat unsettling to discover that the sentence does not appear in the earliest and best manuscripts of either Matthew or Luke. Evidently, the doxology was not part of the prayer as Jesus originally gave it. In fact, it appears for the first time in the second and third centuries.

While this doxology may not have been directly spoken by Jesus, it can claim broad biblical support. After King David assembled the building materials for the future temple, he declared, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty . . . Yours is the kingdom" (1 Chronicles 29:11). Echoes of this doxology vibrate at the end of time in the chant of the four living creatures, "Blessings and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13). The affirmation makes a fitting conclusion to the prayer: "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13).

The doxology, however, is not an assumption that we must accept in order to pray, but rather a confidence to which repeated prayer draws us. When God's kingdom and the dignity of God's name get first emphasis in our lives, then money and bottom lines stop bringing us anxiety and strife. Then, and only then, as we ask for daily bread, we recognize that apart from God full stomachs often come with empty hearts. Through prayer we experience that God actually forgives our sin - not simply shuts His eyes to our disobedience - and provides us with power to forgive others and lead us away from Satan's traps. In a life of prayer we discover a Father rich and generous and inexhaustible beyond measure: His is the kingdom and the power and the glory.

Yours,
O Lord,
is the greatness,
the power
and the glory,
the victory
and the majesty . . .

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Chapter Three: The Art of Praying for Children

Give[our children], O Lord, steadfast hearts that cannot be dragged down by false loves;
give[them] courageous hearts that cannot be worn down by trouble;
give [them] righteous hearts that cannot be sidetracked by unholy or unworthy goals.

Give to[them] also, our Lord and God, understanding to know You, diligence to look for You, wisdom to recognize You, and a faithfulness that will bring[them] to see You face-to-face. Amen.

-Thomas á Kempis

The Art of Praying for Children

As mothers, we realize there is a battle for the very soul of this young generation. “The thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10 KJV)

Word Treasure

10:10 abundantly, perissos; Strong’s #4053: Superabundance, excessive, overflowing, surplus, over and above, more than enough, profuse, extraordinary, above the ordinary, more than sufficient.

“Jesus said that He came to give life, not just ordinary existence, but life in fullness, abundance, and prosperity (3 John 2). On the other hand, the enemy (Satan) comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. The line is clearly drawn. On one side is God with goodness, life, and plenty of all that is necessary for life (see Joel 2:26 and 2 Peter 1:3) and on the other side is the enemy of our souls, who comes to rob us of God’s blessings.” (Spirit Filled Life Bible)

The contention remains. Even so, we are called to, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9 KJV).

Resist: The active imperative indicates an assertive stance against the Adversary’s operations. Because of the Devil’s aggressive hostility, Christians must be spiritually alert, not only to withstand his attacks (employing the armor described in Ephesians 6:10-18), but in prayer and spiritual warfare opposing him.

(Spirit Filled Life Bible)

Our course of action as a “Hannah” is to be vigilant prayerful, and steadfast in the faith.

Listen and Watch

“When we are faced with a great need, either for ourselves or for others, we should begin by humbly seeking to know God’s will in the matter: ‘Father, what do You want to do in this situation?’ Jesus said, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work’ (John 5:17). He listened to the voice of the Father, and He watched Him. Be careful not to start or end a prayer by saying blindly, ‘If it be Your will.’ Rather, you should seek to know God’s will in the situation and then base your prayer upon it.” (Spirit Filled Life Bible)

Then answered Jesus unto them,
Verily, verily, I say unto you,

‘The Son can do nothing of himself,
but what he seeth the father do:
for what thing soever he doeth,
these also doeth the Son likewise.’
(John 5:19 KJV)

Intercession

“It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8:34 KJV)

Word Treasure

make intercession, entunchano; Strong’s #1793: To fall in with, meet with in order to converse. From this description of a casual encounter, the word progresses to the idea of pleading with a person on behalf of another, although at times the petition may be against another (Acts 25:24; Romans 11:20).

Jesus is our example. He is interceding on our behalf. Jesus lives to intercede for those who come to God through Him. (Hebrews 7:25)

An intercessor, then, is one who petitions God on behalf of another.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:18)

An intercessor’s prayer, marked by earnestness, fervency, and energy, releases God’s power in petitions just asked.

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

An intercessor recognizes the power of using God’s Word when praying.

“For the Word of God is quick and powerful (energetic) and sharper than any two-edged sword.” (Hebrews 4:12 KJV)

Scripture Prayers for Children

Scripture prayer is a powerful weapon when praying on the behalf of another. It is praying back to God what He has written. One way to pray scripturally is by placing your child’s name in the scripture.

The Scripture prayers below are divided into three sections:

Prayers for Conversion
Prayers for Consecration
Prayers for Commission

Conversion to Christ: Scripture Prayers for Salvation

My child:

1. Will be turned from darkness to light. (Acts 26:18) and that (insert child's name) 's eyes be opened, that he/she will turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God and receive the forgiveness of sin offered through Jesus Christ by faith.

2. Will not be blinded from the truth by Satan. (2 Corinthians 4:4)
Remove the blinders from the mind of _____ so that he/she may see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

3. Will repent of their sin and turn to God. (Acts 3:19)
Father, I pray that _____ would forsake his/her sin and turn to You so that his/her sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

4. Will be convicted of sin and guided in all truth by the Holy Spirit. (John 16:8; 13)
By your Holy Spirit, convict _____ of his/her guilt in regard to sin, and guide him/her in all truth.

5. Will humbly seek Christ. (John 7:37-38)
Give _____ a desire to humbly seek after You. And when this child believes in You, there will be streams of living water flowing from within him/her.

6. Will seek to know God. (Acts 17:27)
That _____ would seek God and reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far off.

7. Will be drawn to Jesus. (John 6:40; 2 Peter 3:9)
Father, You say that no one can come to Jesus unless You draw him. Father, I beseech You to begin drawing _____ to Jesus. For your will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life. (John 6:40; 2 Peter 3:9)

8. Will receive the message from those sent. (Luke 10:2; Ephesians 2:8-9)
Lord of the Harvest, send laborers into the life of _____. Cause him/her to fully understand the truth of the gospel. Give him/her the grace needed and the faith to believe.

9. Will know Christ at an early age. (2 Timothy 3:15)
That _____ will know from an early age the holy Scriptures, which are able to make him/her wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

10. Will grasp the knowledge of God's love in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:18-19)
That _____ will grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for him/her. May _____ know the greatness and depth of Your love that surpasses human knowledge.

My child is watching my every move.
He's looking for a glimpse of Jesus.

Each word I speak speaks volumes to his tender ears.
He wants to hear Jesus.
Each kiss I give reminds him of my constant care.
He wants to know who is this God who cares.
He's heard, he sees, he's felt, yet he awaits the time of the Father's drawing to Himself.
Come, Lord, do Your drawing.

In the next two sections (consecration and commission), write out a prayer using the scripture verse indicated. The "Mother's Journal of Prayers" at the end of this booklet will be useful as you journal your prayers.

Prayer of Consecration: Scripture Prayers for the Setting Apart

My child:

Will hate sin. (Psalm 97:10)

Will love God with all his/her heart and with all his soul and with all his/her strength. (Mark 12:30)

Will love his/her neighbor as himself/herself. (Mark 12:31)

Will be filled with the knowledge of His will. (Colossians 1:9-12)

Will discern what is best. (Philippians 1:9-11)

Will be inclined to fear God and keep His commands. (Deuteronomy 5:29)

Will not love the world or anything in the world. (1 John 2:15)

Will persevere and endure hardships and not grow weary. (Revelation 2:3)

Will not renounce his/her faith in Christ. (Revelation 2:13b)

Will do more than he/she did at first. (Revelation 2:19)

Will keep His Word and not deny His name. (Revelation 3:8b)

Will keep His command to endure patiently. (Revelation 3:10)

Will not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers but his/her delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he/she meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)

Will put his/her hope in His Word. (Psalm 119:74)

Will let no sin rule over him/her. (Psalm 119:133)

Will remain in Christ, bearing much fruit, showing himself/herself to be Christ's disciples. (John 15:5,8)

Will live by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16)

Will allow God to work in him/her to will and to act according to his/her good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)

Will respect authority. (1 Samuel 15:23)

Will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Will obey his/her parents in the Lord. (Proverbs 1:8-9)

Will be morally pure. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Will not lust after wicked things. (Psalm 141:4)

Will not lean on his/her own understanding but acknowledge Him. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Will have favor with God. (Psalm 90:17)

Will know God better. (Ephesians 1:17)

Will guard his heart. (Proverbs 4:23)

Will let love and faithfulness never leave him/her. (Proverbs 3:3-4)

Will know Your Name and trust you. (Psalm 9:10)

Will be safe for he/she will take refuge in You. (Psalm 91)

Will call Him Lord. (Psalm 16:2)

Will resolve that his/her mouth will not sin. (Psalm 17:3)

Will walk in His paths and His ways. (Psalm 25:4)

Will confess sin quickly. (Psalm 25:11)

Will seek His face always. (Psalm 27:8)

Will be taught by the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26)

Will refrain from anger and turn from wrath. (Psalm 37:8)

Will have a pure heart and steadfast spirit. (Psalm 51:10)

Will have a broken and contrite spirit. (Psalm 51:17)

Will find rest in God alone. (Psalm 62:1-2)

Will have wise thinking. (Proverbs 23:19)

Will be firm in his/her convictions. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

Will be strengthened with power through His Spirit in his/her inner being. (Ephesians 3:14-19)

Will have God as his/her portion. (Psalm 73:25-26)

Will tell of His deeds. (Psalm 73:28)

Will desire to be with those who love the Lord. (2 Timothy 2:22b)

Will know the voice of his Shepherd and follow. (John 10:4-5)

Will have an undivided heart. (Psalm 86:11)

Will proclaim your love and faithfulness. (Psalm 1-3)

Will enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. (Psalm 100)

Will fear God. (Psalm 112:1)

Will have success. (Psalm 118:25)

Will be given understanding to learn your commands. (Psalm 119:73)

Will eat the fruit of his/her labor; blessings and prosperity will be his/hers. (Psalm 128:1-4)

Will be taught to do Your will. (Psalm 143:10)

Will never lose the willingness to turn from reproof. (Proverbs 1:23-25)

Will never try to be wise in his/her own eyes. (Proverbs 3:7-8)

Will always abide in God's love. (Psalm 15)

Will turn his/her hear to wisdom, draw his/her heart to understanding, call out for insight, cry out loud for understanding and search for it as hidden treasure, then he/she will understand the fear of the Lord. (Proverbs 2:1-5)

Will lay hold of My words with all his/her heart. (Proverbs 4:4)

Will hate evil. (Proverbs 8:13)

Will walk in integrity. (Proverbs 10:9)

Will hold his/her tongue. (Proverbs 10:19)

Will be trustworthy. (Proverbs 11:13)

Will be kind. (Proverbs 11:17)

Will be blameless in his/her ways. (Proverbs 11:20)

Will be generous. (Proverbs 11:25)

Will seek good. (Proverbs 11:27)

Will be good and obtain favor from the Lord. (Proverbs 12:2)

Will promote peace. (Proverbs 12:20b)

Will be cautious in friendship. (Proverbs 12:26)

Will guard his/her lips. (Proverbs 13:3)

Will hate what is false. (Proverbs 13:5)

Will act out of knowledge. (Proverbs 13:16)

Will heed correction. (Proverbs 13:18)

Will commit to the Lord whatever he/she does. (Proverbs 16:3)

Will overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11)

Will lend to the poor. (Proverbs 19:17)

Will do what is right and just. (Proverbs 21:2)

Will be humble. (Proverbs 22:4)

Will love a pure heart and be gracious in speech. (Proverbs 22:11)

Will be skilled in work. (Proverbs 22:29)

Will apply his/her heart to instruction and his/her ears to words of knowledge. (Proverbs 23:12)

Will be zealous for the fear of the Lord. (Proverbs 23:17)

Will not envy wicked men nor desire their company. (Proverbs 24:1)

Will not join with the rebellious. (Proverbs 24:21)

Will feed his/her enemy and gave him water for his thirst. (Proverbs 25:21-22)

Will not have a lying tongue nor a flattering mouth. (Proverbs 26:28)

Will be as bold as a lion. (Proverbs 28:1)

Will not conceal his sin. (Proverbs 28:13)

Will hate ill-gotten gain. (Proverbs 28:16)

Will be a man/woman of lowly spirit. (Proverbs 29:23)

Will speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Will be called an intercessor. (Ezekiel 22:30)

Will long after God. (Psalm 42:1)

Will be poor in spirit, meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, be merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker, and will mourn. (Matthew 5:2-9)

Will be known by the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Will sow to please the Spirit. (Galatians 6:8)

Will live by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16)

Will be led by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:18)

Will keep step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

Will fix his/her eyes on Jesus. (2 Corinthians 4:18)

Will make his/her body a slave. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Will honor another above himself/herself. (Romans 12:10)

Will be a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. (Romans 12:1)

Will be conformed into the image of God's Son. (Romans 8:29)

Will do nothing by himself/herself; but will do only what he/she sees his/her Father doing, because whatever the Father does he/she also does. (John 5:19)

Will persevere under trial. (James 1:12)

Will be a doer of the Word. (James 1:22)

Will be commended as one who pleases God. (Hebrews 11:5b)

Will approach the throne of grace with confidence. (Hebrews 4:16)

Will watch his/her life and doctrine closely. (1 Timothy 4:16)

Will be joyful in God his/her Savior. (Habakkuk 3:18b)

Will love God through obedience. (John 14:21)

Will draw near to God with a sincere heart. (Hebrews 10:22)

Prayers of Commission: Scripture Prayers for Sending Out

My child:

Will preach fearlessly. (Acts 9:27)

Will speak boldly for the Lord. (Acts 14:3)

Will speak words that will "cut to the heart." (Acts 2:37)

Will be enabled to speak His Word with great boldness. (Acts 4:29)

Will be endued with great power to preach the resurrection of the Lord. (Acts 4:33)

Will be full of God's grace, full of faith, full of wisdom, full of power and full of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 6:3; 5; 8)

Will not love his/her life so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:11)

Will heed the call to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

Will teach converts to obey everything Jesus commanded. (Matthew 28:20)

Will be a witness in their Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Will have the Lord's hand on him/her. (Acts 11:21)

Will hear His voice and follow. (Acts 11:12)

Will be one who calls others to "repent" yet be one who is repentant. (Acts 3:19)

Will be Christ's ambassador. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Will preach, not with persuasive and wise words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that his faith not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

Chapter Four: The Art of Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord
make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and
give you peace.
Numbers 6:24-26

To value something means to attach honor to it. This is the meaning of the verb "to bless." In Hebrew, the word bless literally means "to bow the knee." This was used in showing reverence, even awe, to an important person.

Words of blessing should carry with them the recognition that this person is valuable and has redeeming qualities. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or to her. In the Scriptures, recognition is based on who they are, not simply their performance.

From Old Testament times to today, the blessing has been an important gift offered to Jewish children. In fact, it has been a duty of parents to their children.

Several Scriptures (KJV) document the passing of the blessing from parent to child:

Genesis 27:30

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

Genesis 27:35

And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

Genesis 27:36

And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

Genesis 27:38

And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

Genesis 27:41

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Genesis 49:28

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. (Jacob gave each the blessing appropriate to him.)

Deuteronomy 33:1

And this is the blessing, where with Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

The Blessing

The blessing has several key elements.

A blessing begins with a meaningful touch.

It continues with a spoken message of high value, a message that pictures a special future for the individual being blessed,

and one that is based on an

active commitment

to see the blessing come to pass.

Each is important

to giving the blessing.

Meaningful Touch

Each time the blessing was given in Scripture, meaningful touch provided a caring background to the words that would be spoken. Kissing, hugging, or laying on of hands were all a part of bestowing the blessing. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, affirmation, even physical health.

Interesting enough, the act of laying on of hands has become a focus of a great deal of modern-day interest and research. Dr. Dolores Krieger, professor of nursing at New York University, has made numerous studies on the effects of laying on of hands. What she found is that both the toucher and the one being touched receive a physiological benefit. How is this possible? Inside our bodies is hemoglobin, the pigment of the red blood cells, which carries oxygen to the tissues. Repeatedly, Dr. Krieger found that hemoglobin levels in both people's bloodstreams go up during the act of laying on of hands.

When Isaac blessed Jacob, an embrace and a kiss were involved. (Genesis 27:26) Ephraim and Manasseh were certainly moved on their day of blessing as the old patriarch gently touched them. (Genesis 48:13-17)

In the New Testament, Jesus was a model of someone who communicated the blessing to others by touch.

Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 1:40-42

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

“Meaningful touch” is the first element of the blessing. The second is “Spoken words.”

Spoken Words

Words have incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. Abraham spoke a blessing to Isaac. Isaac spoke a blessing to his son Jacob. Jacob spoke it to each of his twelve sons and to two of his grandchildren. And God has always been a God who communicates His blessing through spoken words. A blessing is not a blessing unless it is spoken.

James points out the power and the importance of a spoken word as well as the destruction caused by words unkindly spoken.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example.

Although they are so large
and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a
very small rudder wherever
the pilot wants to go.

Likewise the tongue is
a small part of the body,
but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire
by a small spark.
The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body.
(James 3:3-6)

There is power in the tongue. It can be used for both good and evil, for building up and tearing down. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21).

Good Words spoken . . .

words of love and acceptance, words of affirmation and blessing, will grace and mold a child positively.

Negative words . . .

can shatter children emotionally rather than shape them positively.

Absence of words . . .

cause suffering to all.

It is not just any words, but words of high value that attach themselves to a person and communicate the blessing. The next element of the blessing is "Expressing High Value."

Expressing High Value

As we mentioned earlier, to "value" something means to attach great importance to it. When we bless someone, we are deciding that he or she is of high value.

This valuing is exactly what the patriarchs in the Old Testament did in blessing their children with the family blessing. Threads of love and value run throughout the fabric of the blessing. We can see this in the words Isaac spoke to Jacob: "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness - an abundance of grain and new wine.

May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

Word pictures were used to communicate the blessing. Jacob used a different word picture with each of his sons to bestow the blessing. We read, “And that is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him” (Genesis 49:28). Each of Jacob’s sons was an individual, and each of them received a blessing that depicted his value to his father in the form of a word picture he could remember always.

Word pictures: The Four Keys to Communicating Value

1. Use an everyday object. Try to capture a character trait or physical attribute of your beloved child in an everyday object.
2. Match the emotional meaning of the trait you are praising with the object you’ve picked. In the Song of Solomon, Solomon uses word pictures that capture the emotional meaning behind the trait he wants to praise.
3. Word pictures unravel our defenses. We will listen to praise more intently when it comes packaged in a word picture. That is one reason why our Lord used word pictures to communicate both praise and condemnation through parables.
4. Word pictures point out a person’s potential. This illustrates the underdeveloped traits of a person.

Picturing a Special Future

Communicating a special future to a child is such an important part of giving the blessing. When a person feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude on life.

In the Old Testament, the patriarchs pictured a special future for their children. We can see this by looking at the words Isaac spoke to Jacob.

“May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness,
an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve
you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers,
and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed
and those who bless you be blessed.”

When Isaac spoke these words, much of his son’s blessing lay in the future. The picture of a fulfilling future was a powerful gift.

Children are filled with the potential to be all God intended them to be. It is as if the Lord places them on our doorstep one day, and we as parents are left as stewards of their abilities. During the years we have children in our home, the words we speak to them can wrap themselves around them like a cocoon. What we say shapes and develops their thoughts and thinking patterns. Loving words that picture a special future help children change and develop in a positive way.

“For I know the plans I have for you,”
declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you
and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.”
Jeremiah 29:11

Spend time in prayer asking God to show you a glimpse of your child's future. For He knows the plans He has for him, plans to prosper and give hope. Speak them over your child.

The fifth element of the blessing is “An Active Commitment.”

An Active Commitment

Commitment is important because, as we have seen, words of blessing are not enough. They need to be backed by the commitment of a person to see the blessing come to pass.

The First Step: Commit the Person Being Blessed to the Lord

When you look at the blessing in the Old Testament, something that stands out is the way the patriarchs committed their children to the Lord. One reason they called on God to confirm their child's blessing was because they were sure of His commitment to them.

The Second Step: Commit Our Lives to Their Best Interest

It takes commitment of our time, energy, and resources. However, Jacob observed another important principle in blessing. He recognized that every one of his children was unique. In blessing a child, we need to take a personal interest in each child. The better we know our children and their unique set of needs, the better we will be able to give them their own unique blessing. Blessing our children involves understanding their unique bent. In addition, it means being willing to do what is best for that person - even if it means having to correct them when they are wrong.

The Third Step: Become a Student of Those We Wish to Bless

One thing in becoming a student of your child is to be lovingly persistent in communicating with the one you are blessing. A second way is the importance of sharing activities. Not only do they draw us closer together, but sharing activities with our children offers tremendous opportunities to learn about our children. Taking the initiative in asking questions can be a third important way to become a student of our children. A fourth practical way is to listen to them with our full attention.

Commitment is costly. If you are serious about committing yourself to blessing those you love, expect to pay a price. Not in monetary terms, rather think in terms of time, energy, and effort.

Is the price worth it? You bet!

The above excerpts are taken from *The Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D., copyright 1986,
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Blessings From the Lord To You

Psalms 3:8 KJV

Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

Psalms 24:5

He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Psalms 67:1

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us.

Psalms 67:6

Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.

Psalms 67:7

God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Psalms 133:3

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Proverbs 10:22

The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Isaiah 44:3

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.

Malachi 3:10 KJV

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Galatians 3:14

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Chapter Five:

The Art of Fasting

And I set
my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication,
with fasting . . .
Daniel 9 :3

There was a man whose son was much like the prodigal in Luke 15:11-24. Angry words spoken had destroyed what relationship was left. The son, without notice, “set off for a distant land.”

The father was desperate. Out of desperation he set aside time to fast and pray for his son. Each day for the next nine years the father rose early and instead of eating the morning meal, he devoted two hours to praying for his son. Time passed. Days became years and still no sign of his son. Then one day in the ninth year, his son came home. “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” (Luke 15:24)

Fasting is not a way of “getting what we want” from God. It is in fact a discipline where we forsake the flesh to seek the Lord and His way on matters.

What follows is an in-depth “Study on Fasting” by Diane S. Dew, copyright 1976, 1977, 1998. (All Scripture from KJV)

I. Is there a place for fasting in New Testament times?

A. Fasting was not required of the disciples by Jesus.

Matthew 9:14 (Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33) “Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not?”

B. But Jesus spoke of a day when there would be a place for fasting.

Matthew 6:16-18 (Not “if,” but “when ye fast . . .”) “Moreover when ye fast, . . . But thou, when thou fastest . . .”

Matthew 9:14-15 (Luke 5:34-35) “And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.”

II. What guidelines are set forth in scripture concerning fasting?

A. It is to be done in a manner of humility and secrecy.

Matthew 6:16-18 “Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they

have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ...”

Luke 18:9-14 “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray. . . The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are . . . I fast twice in the week, I give tithes . . . And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to this house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

B. Fasting is closely related to prayer and reading of the Word.

I Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, “And her adversary . . . provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? . . . Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him . . .”

Nehemiah 1:4 “. . . when I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Nehemiah 9: 1-3 “. . . the children of Israel were assembled with fasting . . . and stood and confessed their sins . . . and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshiped the Lord their God.”

Daniel 9:3, 20 “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting . . . and while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication . . .”

Joel 2:12 “. . . turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”

Jonah 3:8, etc. “For word came unto the king . . . and he caused it to be proclaimed and published . . . saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry

mightily unto God . . . Who can tell if God will . . . turn away from his fierce anger . . . And God saw . . .”

Luke 2:37 “And she was a widow of about 44 years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”

Acts 9:9, 11 "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

Acts 10:30 “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing.”

Acts 13:2 “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said . . .”

Acts 14:23 “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord . . .”

I Corinthians 7:5 “. . . that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer . . .” C. A fast may be either absolute or partial.

1. Examples of absolute (complete) fasts:

Deuteronomy 9:9, 18 “. . . 40 nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water.”

Ezra 10:6 “Ezra. . . did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned . . .”

Esther 4:16 “Go, gather together all the Jews . . . and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day . . .”

Acts 9:9 “. . . and neither did eat nor drink.”

Acts 27:33 “. . . This is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.”

2. Example of partial fasts (abstinence from certain foods only):

Daniel 10:3 “I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”

D. There is a place for both the corporate (group) and the individual (personal) fast.

1. Examples of corporate fasts:

I Samuel 7:5-6 “And Samuel said, Gather all Israel ... and they gathered . . . and fasted . . .”

II Chronicles 20:3 “Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.

Ezra 8:21-23 “Then I proclaimed a fast . . . So we fasted and besought our God . . .”

Nehemiah 9:1-3 “ . . . the children of Israel were assembled with fasting . . .”

Joel 2:15-16 “. . . sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people . . .”

Jonah 3:5-10 “the people . . . proclaimed a fast . . . from the greatest of them even to the least”

2. Examples of the individual fast

II Samuel 12:15-16, 22-23 “. . . and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.” I Kings 21:27-29 “When Ahab heard those words, he . . . and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.”

Psalms 35:13 “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting . . .”

Daniel 9:3 “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer . . . with fasting . . .”

Luke 2:36-37 “And there was one Anna, a prophetess . . . a widow of about 44 years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”

Acts 9:9 “. . . and neither did eat nor drink.”

III. Fasting in itself is of no spiritual value (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; I Corinthians 8:8) – “that which is of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6) but it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with blessing.

Joel 2:12, 13 “Rend your heart, and not your garments . . .”

Romans 14:6 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit . . .”

I Corinthians 15:50 “. . . nor does perishable inherit the

imperishable.

- A. Only fasting that is done with the right motive, that of glorifying God, can be pleasing in His sight.

Isaiah chapter 58 “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? ... Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure . . . ye fast for strife and debate . . . ye shall not fast as ye do this day . . . Is it such a fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands . . . to undo the heavy burdens . . . to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him . . .”

Zechariah 7:5-6 “. . . When ye fasted and mourned . . . those 70 years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?”

Matthew 6:16-18 “The hypocrites . . . disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.”

Luke 18:9-14 “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I am not as other men are . . . I fast twice in the week . . .”

- B. The same Bible that teaches abstaining from foods (as God leads) also warns us against testing the Lord (Matthew 4:7).

1. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:9), and we are to care for them as such (v. 20).

2. It may indeed be profitable for a season for us to exercise severe discipline, to “keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (I Corinthians 9 :27), to be “temperate in all things” (I Corinthians 9 :25), but we must also realize that “that which is flesh is flesh,” and we cannot produce spiritual results – however sincere our intentions – from that which is purely flesh.

3. To deny the flesh of its natural desires may cause us to be more “in tune” to hear the voice of the Lord (Deuteronomy 9:18, 25, etc.), but it also places us in a realm more easily prone to the attack of the enemy. It was when Jesus had been fasting for 40 days that He was faced with the greatest Satanic attack (Matthew 4:1-3; Luke 4:1-2).

- C. Scripture warns that in the last days there will be many “forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats,” etc. (I Timothy 4:1-3). We are to test the spirits, to see whether they be of God (I John 4:1).

IV. How long should I fast?

A. Bible personalities fasted and sought God diligently until they obtained from God what they desired (see the examples of Hannah, I Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18; and Paul, Acts 9:9,17-19) – or until the Lord made it evident that what they requested simply would not be obtained (as in the case of David, II Samuel 12:15-23).

B. The length of a fast may vary.

1. One night.

Daniel 6:18

2. One day.

I Samuel 7:6

II Samuel 1:12; 3:35

Judges 20:26

3. Three days and three nights.

Esther 4:16

Acts 9:9, 17-19

4. Seven days.

I Samuel 31:13

II Samuel 12:16-23

5. Fourteen days.

Acts 27:33-34

6. Twenty-one days.

Daniel 10:3-13

7. Forty days.

a. Moses.

Exodus 24:18; 34:28

Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, 25-29; 10:10

b. Elijah.

I Kings 19:8

c. Jesus.

Matthew 4:2 (Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2)

V. When should I fast?

Many occasions for fasting are recorded in scripture.

- A. The ordination of elders and commissioning of apostles to ministry.
Acts 13:3 “And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

Acts 14:23 “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord . . .”

- B. Intercession for the people of God.

Exodus 24:18 Deuteronomy 9:8-9, 12-20, 23-27

Ezra 10:6

Daniel 9:3-4

Joel 2:12-14, 17-18

Jonah 3:5-10

- C. Humbling and chastening of oneself.

I Kings 21:27-29 “. . . Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?”

Psalms 35:13 “. . . I humbled myself with fasting . . .”

Psalms 69:10 “I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting . . .”

- D. Seeking the Lord and His way.

Judges 20:26-28, “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until evening, and . . . inquired of the Lord . . . (whether to) go out to battle . . . And the Lord said, Go up . . .”

II Chronicles 20:3 “And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”

Ezra 8:21-23 “Then I proclaimed a fast . . . that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask the king . . . to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our god is upon all them for good that seek him . . . So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.”

- E. Repentance and confession of sin.

I Samuel 7:6 “On that day they fasted and there they confessed.”

I Kings 21:27-29 “When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted.”

Ezra 10:6 “. . . he ate no bread, nor drank water: for he mourned because of the transgression . . .”

Nehemiah 1:4-7, “. . . when I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed . . .”
Nehemiah 9:1-3 “. . . the children of Israel were assembled with fasting . . . and stood and confessed their sins . . . one fourth part of the day . . . they confessed . . .”

Daniel 9:3-5, 20 “. . . confessing my sin and the sin of my people . . .”

Jonah 3:5-10 “They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.”

F. Receiving healing.

I Samuel 1:5-11, 18-20 “. . . and the Lord closed her womb . . . So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son.”

Isaiah 58:8 “. . . and your healing will quickly appear . . .”

Acts 9:9, 17-19 “For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. . . . Jesus . . . has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

G. Petitioning God to withhold His hand in judgment.

Deuteronomy 9:18, 25 “And I fell down before the Lord . . . I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins . . . because the Lord had said he would destroy you.”

H. Preparation to receive word from God.

Deuteronomy 9:18, 25 “. . . I fell prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water . . .

Isaiah 58:9 “Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

I. Spiritual deliverance.

Isaiah 58:6 “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands . . . to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

Mark 9:29 (Matthew 17:21) “And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

J. Seeking assistance in time of fear.

II Chronicles 20:3 “And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast . . .” K. Mourning another's death (II Samuel 1:12; 3:35); out of concern for another's safety (Daniel 6:18); or when faced with threats on one's own life (Esther 4:3; 9:1-3).

L. Seeking protection.

Ezra 8:21-23 “There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.”

M. Lacking material provision; in need.

II Corinthians 11:27 “. . . in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often ...”

VI. Fasting is an extremely valuable and important facet of the Christian life; but it is not an infallible means of “getting what we want” from God. (Jeremiah 14:12, “When they fast, I will not hear their cry . . .”) Example: II Samuel 12:15-23, David's son died anyway; I Samuel 15:22, obedience is better than sacrifice

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A
Mother's Journal
of Prayers
