

# Prayer-01 Intro

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald emphasizes the power and importance of prayer in the Christian life, highlighting its conditions and the impact it can have on individuals and the world.*

**Duration:** 40:36

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 6:11-13, John 15:4, 1 John 5:14

**Topics:** "Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a woman named Ilsa who found a pair of brown shoes that were exactly her size on top of a pile of clothing. She believed that these shoes were an answer to her prayer from God. The speaker then relates this story to the biblical account of the Israelites in the wilderness, where their shoes and clothing never wore out. The sermon emphasizes the importance of walking by faith rather than by sight and encourages believers to avail themselves of the privilege of prayer. The speaker also shares the testimony of George Verwer, who was transformed from a peddler of pornographic literature to a passionate advocate for Christian literature through the power of prayer. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God is honored by the greatness of our requests and that prayer has the potential to change history and shape world events.

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## Transcript

Today we begin our study on the subject of prayer. The last two weeks we've been going over this mighty force that is available to Christian people. The force of prayer.

You know, one of the first things that happens when a person is converted, he has the instinct of prayer. That's strange, isn't it? But it's true. If you don't pray, you better think.

You better think about where you are spiritually. Because saved people pray. I'll never forget during the Second World War, a young fellow.

It was during the time when we had blackouts overseas. And a fellow got saved one night, and we got down on our knees. He had never prayed before.

Never prayed before in his life. And he said, Lord, I've been in a blackout up till now, but now I see the light. Had never prayed before.

The moment he was saved, he had the instinct of prayer. That's true. It says that in the Bible.

It says that when we get saved, the Spirit of God is given to us. And we cry, Abba, Father. We look up into the face of God and call him Father for the first time.

Remarkable, isn't it? Now, we've been going over some points to think of in connection with prayer, and I'd like to continue this morning. First of all, in prayer, there's nothing too big for God, and there's nothing too small. There's nothing too big for God, even in the realm of the impossible.

Or the humanly impossible. I think of a Christian mother back in New Jersey some years ago, and she had two sons going to the high school there, and the high school was a cesspool of sin and immorality. And she was concerned for her sons, that they might get swept up into all this filth and sexual sin.

She got down on her knees, and she prayed. She prayed that God would visit that high school with his mighty salvation, and from that high school that blessing might flow out to the far ends of the earth. That's a pretty big prayer, isn't it? Let me remind you.

She prayed that God would visit that high school with his salvation, and that blessing might flow out from that school to the four corners of the earth. One day she was out puttering around in the garden in front of her little cottage, and a high school student walked by with his neck in a dog collar. That's not the professional name.

Whatever you get when you have backlash or whiplash in a car accident. What do you call that? Collar. Anyway, you know what I mean.

Well, he walked by and he had his neck in his collar, and it seemed that the spirit of God said to her, pray for that young man. She didn't know who he was. So she started praying for this fellow whose neck had been injured.

Not long after that, that young fellow went into the railroad station, the local railroad station, and there was a tract rack there. And he picked up a tract and read it. Those tracts were put in the tract rack by the woman who prayed.

This was all put together later. They didn't know it at the time. But that was one of her ministries for the Lord.

She put tracts in the tract rack. And he went in, he picked one up, and he read it. Not long after that, that fellow with his neck in the collar was in high school.

That's where he was at the time. He was in the high school. And a young fellow came up to him and gave him a Gospel of John.

That young fellow was the son of the woman who was praying. After that, the young fellow with his neck in the collar went to Madison Square Gardens to hear Billy Graham preach, and he got saved. He came back to the high school, and after he came back to that high school, he began witnessing for the Lord, and the spirit of God began working, and it has been estimated in the years that followed, 250 young people trusted Jesus Christ as Savior in that high school.

She prayed that God would visit that school with his mighty salvation. Well, he did. It was quite a revival.

250 people saved. That young fellow, incidentally, at the time he was saved, he was a peddler of pornographic literature and had 19 others working for him. When he got saved, God completely reversed

him and gave him a passion for Christian literature.

His name is George Verwer. He started off this work known as Operation Mobilization, and today it has reached out to the four corners of the earth carrying the Gospel. Why? Because a woman back in New Jersey dared to get on her knees and cry to God to answer prayer.

Thou art coming to a king great petitions with thee bring, for his love and power are such you can never ask too much. God is honored by the greatness of our requests. I said there's nothing too big for God.

There's nothing too small for God either. Some years ago I was in England at a training conference for this group Operation Mobilization. There was a German girl there in the group.

Her name was Ilse Brockhaus. And Ilse needed a pair of shoes. And all she needed to do was go to the team leader and say, Look, I need a pair of shoes.

Give me the money. He would have given her the money. She could have gone down to any store in London and bought the pair of shoes.

But she didn't want to do that. She wanted to prove God in a life of prayer. And so day after day Ilse would cry to the Lord for a pair of brown shoes.

Well, at that time they had a room there at the conference called Charlie. Charlie was a room where if you had extra clothes or extra anything you put it there and it soon grew. It was kind of a used clothing center.

And Ilse used to go into the room day after day looking for her pair of shoes, but it wasn't there. We came to the end of the conference when they were packing the trucks to fan out all over Europe and the Middle East. The very last day of the conference Ilse went in and on top of a pile of clothing there was a pair of brown shoes.

She tried them on. They were exactly her size. She took them off with her onto the crusade and those shoes meant more to her than the finest pair of shoes she could have bought in London.

Why? Because they were an answer to prayer from God. Give God a chance. Before you go off and willfully, high-mindedly spend money give God a chance to provide.

Prove Him in a life of prayer. Nothing too big and nothing too small for Him. I learned that lesson through Exodus through the children of Israel wandering through the wilderness.

Numbers. Their shoes never wore out. Their clothing never wore out.

Is God interested in our shoes and clothing? He's interested in every detail of our lives. Second thing I'd like to point out about prayer is this that God answers prayer in just exactly the same way you or I would answer it if we knew as much as God knows. If we had His wisdom and His love and His power.

You say, oh, no. Oh, yes. You say, oh, I'd like it different.

It isn't how you'd like it. God answers prayer exactly the same way you would if you knew as much as He knows. If you had His love and if you had His power.

God nothing does nor suffers to be done but what thou wouldst thyself couldst thou but see the end of all He does as well as He. If you could see the way God is working and the end toward which He's working

you'd work it out in exactly the same way as He's working it out. You say, the bitter things of life? No, the bitter things in life too.

I thank God for the bitter things. They've been a friend to grace. They've driven me from the paths of ease to storm the secret place.

All the good I've got from the pleasant times in life I could probably put on the top of a penny. But all the good that I've got from the bitter times of life the difficulties and the heartaches are incalculable. God knows what He's doing.

You say, well, if I were God I wouldn't allow my people to go through persecution and trouble and trial. Oh, yes, you would. If you were God, you would.

In a world like ours, you'd plan it just the same way He plans it. Because you can't see the end of it all as well as He. Sometimes God answers prayers quickly.

Sometimes He has a deeper lesson to teach us. A lesson of learning patience and endurance and waiting on Him. I think especially when people are first saved God gives answers to encourage them on in the Christian life.

But then as they grow and mature in the Christian life they learn the deeper lesson. The poet said it well. He said, God answers prayer.

Sometimes when hearts are weak He gives the very gifts His children seek. But often faith must learn a deeper rest and trust God's silence when He cannot speak. For he whose name is love will send the best.

Stars may burn out nor mountain walls endure but God is true. His promises are sure for those who seek. Now, we've already pointed out that there are conditions to prayer.

Sometimes you go to the Bible and you see verses of Scripture and they seem like blank checks. It seems from that verse of Scripture that you could ask God for almost anything and that He'd give it to you. But there are conditions to prayer.

Individual promises must be taken in the light of all the Word of God. So I'd like to go over with you today some of the conditions for answered prayer. And the first is John 15, 7. The first condition for answered prayer for a child of God is that he must abide in Christ.

He must abide in Christ. John 15, verse 7. If ye abide in me and my words abide in you you shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask whatever you will it shall be done unto you.

So I guess that leaves the only question. What does it mean to abide in Christ? It means to live close to Him. It means to walk in obedience to His will.

You have to be near to hear. You can't follow Jesus at a distance and expect to have an effective prayer life. You have to have your roots deep in God.

You have to be spending time in the Word of God. Spending time in prayer. Fellowshiping with God's people.

And serving Him day by day. John was abiding in Christ. He leaned on the Savior's bosom.

And to John was given the marvelous revelation of Jesus Christ. And there is a wonderful communication of divine intelligence to those who live close to the Lord. Secondly, our prayers must be in the will of God.

Must be in the will of God. 1 John chapter 5 and verse 14. 1 John chapter 5 and verse 14.

This is the confidence that we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. As we grow in the Christian life increasingly we know what the will of God is.

We know it from the scriptures and we can pray with confidence in that realm. But you say sometimes, I don't know what God's will is. Then we pray in the will of God.

That is, we say, if it be Thy will. To use those words is no lack of faith. It's merely an expression of our own ignorance and our placing ourselves in His hands to do with as He pleases.

Then thirdly, our prayers must be in the name of Jesus, in the name of Christ. John 14, verses 13 and 14. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it. We approach God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that He is our access to the Father.

It's His worthiness that allows us to be there. And when we pray in the name of Jesus it's exactly as if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself were making those requests to the Father. Why, that's breathtaking to me.

To think that we have access to the presence of God in the name of Jesus and that Jesus is there making intercession and pleading for us. And then John 16, 23. In that day ye shall ask me nothing.

Verily, verily, I say unto you whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name He will give it you. It's really the name of the Lord Jesus that gives us effective power before God. Like if we go in our own name that means nothing.

But if we go pleading the name of Jesus it means everything. Then we must go in a humble spirit. In a humble spirit.

2 Chronicles way back in the Old Testament 2 Chronicles 7 and verse 14. Just let me read the verse to you since I don't hear so many pages rustling. It says, If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Quite a few conditions to prayer there, aren't there? If my people which are called by my name you have to be a Christian first you have to be saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus shall humble themselves you have to be humble and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways your life has to be clean then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. And next you must have a forgiving spirit when you come into the presence of God you must have a forgiving spirit. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 15 Matthew 6 verse 15 If ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

That means I have something against another brother or sister in Christ and I'm not going to forgive. No, my mind is made up. Seven angels from heaven swearing against me wouldn't make me wrong I grit my teeth and I'm determined not to forgive.

Absolutely no way in which I can have a fruitful prayer life. None. You say, but nobody knows.

Yes, God knows. The one who really counts knows. And God has said clearly in his word that if we have an unforgiving spirit there's no use trying to approach him in prayer.

God isn't playing games. God isn't a ritualist. God isn't deceived by external appearances.

God desires truth in the inward part. You wouldn't think it would affect prayer, but it does. Maybe that's why the heavens are brass over our heads much of the time because we have unforgiving spirits.

And our whole spiritual life is dwarfed and warped and crippled and deformed as a result of it. And then a final condition to prayers we must ask in faith. Matthew chapter 9 and verse 28 We must ask in faith.

Matthew 9, 28 That's a great principle in the spiritual life. According to your faith, be it unto you. God takes us according to our faith.

And when we come to him, we must believe that he's able. Matthew 21 and 22 21 and verse 22 So when you come to these verses of scripture that seem to be a blanket promise of prayer remember there are conditions attached and the conditions have mostly to do with our own spiritual life. With where we are before God.

And if we're really walking in fellowship with the Lord hearing his voice in every line making each faithful saying mine we can expect to see answers to prayer. We can expect to see our lives crackle with the supernatural. We can expect to see things happen that never happen according to the laws of chance or probability.

Another point I'd like to make about prayers is there are really mysteries to prayer. I'm sure that those of you who are Christians here this morning realize that there are mysteries to prayer. A lot of things I don't understand.

But I tell you this. I'd rather pray and see answers to prayer than solve all the mysteries that are in connection with prayer. I've left the mysteries all behind me.

I just want to know God day by day and be able to come to him at the throne of grace and talk to him and see God work in my life and in the lives of others as a result of prayer. That's what counts, isn't it? An old archbishop in England put it well. He said I don't understand all the mysteries of prayer.

All I know is when I pray things happen. When I don't pray they don't. I think that puts it very well.

When I pray things happen. Coincidences happen. When I do not pray they don't.

I think it's good for us to realize that man never comes closer to omnipotence than when he prays to God in the name of the Lord Jesus. That's quite a thought. Let me say that again.

Man never comes closer to omnipotence than when he prays to God in the name of the Lord Jesus. What does that mean? Well, omnipotence means all power and man is not all powerful. Only God is all powerful

and man never will be all powerful even throughout eternity.

Man won't have all power. He'll never be God. But when we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus that's the closest we'll ever come to omnipotence.

Think. Just think of that woman that nobody back in New Jersey getting down on her knees and praying to God and God moving the checkers on the checkerboard. God arranging a fellow's walk to the railroad station and having him a peddler of pornographic literature picking up a tract and reading it.

And arranging her son to give that very fellow a copy of the Gospel of John. And then getting that fellow who really had no desire to be saved getting him to go to Madison Square Gardens and hear Billy Graham. You think those things happen if I can't? Well, I'm too... I just can't believe that.

I'd be gullible if I believed that. It happened by divine arrangement. The next thing I'd like to emphasize to you is that the Christian holds the balance of power in the world.

The Christian can change history and shape world events through the powerful tool of prayer. I've told some of you this story before. I'll repeat it.

A couple of years ago one of our young friends was in jail in Turkey for the Gospel's sake. We had a meeting over here on the second Friday of the month and spent a great deal of time that night praying for him. Praying that God would really release him from that wretched underground dungeon cell where he was smoldering with 60 common criminals.

Incidentally, jail. They haven't heard about rehabilitation in Turkey yet. And when you're put in jail no meals are served.

If you want meals you have to give money to the guards to go and get food for you. There are no facilities in the jail there in Istanbul. There are no beds.

You're just put in an underground dungeon, that's all. And about 60 other men in there with you. And here's one of our boys there and his greatest crime was distributing Gospel literature in Turkey and the Constitution of Turkey guarantees religious liberty.

It's just a myth. So we spent the night praying and time went on. We didn't hear anything.

But when the news of his release came we found that he was released from jail the day after our prayer meeting. Can a little group of people in San Leandro touch the throne of God through prayer and have things happen over in Istanbul, Turkey? Yes, I believe that. I wouldn't go to that prayer meeting every Friday, every second Friday of the month if I didn't believe it.

And we've seen other remarkable things happen. Some years ago there was in the Chad Republic in Africa there was a very wicked ruler there named Tombulba and he was persecuting the Christian church mercilessly. You read Time Magazine at the time you realize that he put one Christian in a drum and beat on the drum until the Christian starved to death.

Had another Christian buried up to his neck in sand so the ants would finish him off. And we spent a night in confession and prayer. Prayer meeting stopped I think around 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

Sunday morning I was driving to the assembly and turned on KCBS. Tombulba toppled from power and slain. And a new military ruler came to power in the Chad.

And I want to tell you the Christian church has had liberty in the Chad ever since. The work has been going ahead and prospering. The Christian holds the balance of power in the world.

And through the mighty tool of prayer we can change history and shape world events. I believe it with all my heart. One man said I measure my influence by the number of people who need my prayers and the number of people who pray for me.

I measure my influence by the number of people I pray for and the number who pray for me. Let me ask you this morning how many people do you pray for? That's an index of your influence in the spiritual realm. And the number who pray for me.

I don't think I'm ever more moved in my over 30 years of Christian service I'm never more moved than when I meet somebody maybe I'm meeting them for the first time as they shake my hand and they say I pray for you every day. I'll tell you that means more to me than if they handed me a check for a thousand dollars. And when we get to heaven we'll find out that that's what really determined the effectiveness of a person's ministry.

How many people pray for us? Here's a great preacher up in the pulpit and swaying the multitudes with his message. And here's a little widow sitting down on the first row of the church in front of him praying for him all the time. You think he's going to get all the reward in heaven? I have news for you.

She's probably the secret of his. Think of what a wonderful privilege it is to pray to God. If you were to be asked to go to the White House have a private audience with the president or other great people of the world or even some of the Hollywood celebrities or whatever.

My. You'd spread the news all over Hayward and Fremont. You have a greater privilege than that.

At any time of the day or night just going into the presence of God in the name of Jesus and having audience with the king of the universe. Funny we don't avail ourselves of the privilege more isn't it? You know why? This is only real if you walk by faith. Most of us walk by sight and not by faith.

That's why a TV program is more thrilling than a prayer meeting. Because we walk by sight and not by faith. And when we get to heaven and all of the blinders are stripped off us and we see things as they are there'll be regret that we didn't pray more.

I'm sure of that. The way of access to God. Well the Bible tells us there is a definite way in Ephesians chapter 2 we're told that we go to God through the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let's just get it. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 18 Ephesians chapter 2 verse 18 For through him that is the Lord Jesus we both that is Jews and Gentiles believing Jews and Gentiles have access by one spirit unto the Father. We pray to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Does that mean we should never pray directly to the Lord Jesus? Well I think you have scriptural precedent for praying directly to Christ. There are many times in the New Testament when the disciples spoke directly to the Lord Jesus. Even when Jesus was in heaven Thomas or Stephen the first martyr of the Christian church spoke directly to him.

We have precedent. I don't think we have any precedent for speaking directly to the Spirit of God. I don't think we have any precedent in the scriptures for praying to the Holy Spirit.

So if we really want to go by the scriptures we would pray to the Father through the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit or we would pray to the Lord Jesus but not directly to the Holy Spirit. Now there's another order in prayer that I think we can learn from the Lord's Prayer and that is this. The Lord's Prayer begins with worship to God then puts God's interest first and then we're allowed to present our own petition.

Let me just explain that to you. The so-called Lord's Prayer says, Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. In other words, when Jesus was teaching the disciples to pray he was saying to them when you come into the presence of God don't just rush into his presence and say gimme gimme gimme gimme presenting your own desires and needs.

When you come into the presence of God stop to worship him. Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. That's worship.

It's ascribing worth to God. It's saying he's worthy of being hallowed. His name of praise and adoration and honor.

Secondly, thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Put God's interest first.

Before you pray for your own aching limbs which is legitimate think about God's interest here on earth. Seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. And thirdly, present your own petitions.

Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

And then close with worship and praise again. Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. I believe, I don't believe the Lord gave that prayer for us to recite by rote, but I believe it's a model prayer and in it we see the elements of true prayer and the order in which they should be presented.

Now there are some problems that come up in connection with prayer and I'd like to just mention one or two of them this morning. There are some of you here today who are praying for unsaved loved ones. I am.

Unsaved relatives. You pray and you pray and you pray and it seems that nothing happens. Can you know definitely that God is going to save them? Can you? Well, I would suggest this to you.

I believe when I pray for my unsaved relatives God acts in answer to that prayer. You say, what do you mean? Well, I believe that when I pray, every time I pray for an unsaved relative, God does something. Maybe the relative is driving along in the car and sees a rock with the words Jesus saved.

Well, that's something. Maybe somebody in the bus hands them a track, a gospel track. Well, that's something.

They may be way over 4,000, 5,000 miles from me, but I believe when I pray God works in answer to that prayer. Maybe they turn on the radio and hear a gospel program. Maybe they shut it off quickly, too.

I don't know. They heard it. Maybe some death or sorrow causes them to think about eternity.

I don't know. I do believe with all my heart that every time I pray for an unsaved person, God does something in answer to that prayer. But God will not save a person against His will.

God will work on that person's will, but God is not going to drag him reluctantly into heaven. God has sent the Son of His love down to this world to suffer, bleed, and die for the perishing. But I tell you, if they reject Him, there's nothing more God can do.

And so I believe that in answer to my prayer, God brings influences to bear in the lives of that person and then leaves it up to that person to decide for or against Jesus Christ. And you say, but suppose they die without Christ. He's still God.

He's still the sovereign of the universe. And I'll still worship and praise Him. Man has no complaint against Him.

The answer in such a case is, let God be true and every man a liar. Almost every person you ever hear of who's ever saved, you say, who prayed for you? And they say, well, I had a grandmother. I think she was a Christian.

Something like that. I sometimes wonder if God ever saved anyone except in answer to prayer. But if you are here today unsaved and God is speaking to your heart, just remember this.

God won't save you against your will. You must open the door. Some years ago, a Christian family were in the living room of their home and a knock came on the front door.

The grandfather said, Who's that? And somebody ran to the door and opened the door and called back who it was. And he said, What does he want? And they called back and told him what he wants. And he said, Tell him to come in.

Judah, that's the gospel message today. Look, somebody's knocking at the door. Who is it? It's the Lord Jesus.

What does he want? He wants to come in and save your soul. Tell him to come in. Just as easy as that.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you this morning for the Savior, that he gives eternal life to those who come and let him come in. We thank you, Lord, you ever opened our darkened eyes because everything in us was against him. By your wonderful grace, you wooed us and won us to your lovely Son.

We pray today for those who are still outside of Christ, perhaps the object of many prayers. Lord, we pray that their wills might be broken this morning at the foot of the cross, that they might come sweetly to the Lord Jesus and accept him as Lord and Savior. We ask it as we give our thanks in his precious name.

Amen.

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