

Building a strategic Prayer Life

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Saint John Chrysostom (Archbishop of Constantinople and an important Early Church Father) wrote this about the power of prayer:

"Prayer is an all-efficient panoply (*complete suit of armour; protective covering; full ceremonial attire; special dress or equipment*), a treasure undiminished, a mine which is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by the clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings. . . . The potency of prayer hath subdued the strength of fire, it hath bridled the rage of lions, hushed anarchy to rest; extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of heaven, assuaged diseases, repelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt."

Who can read that and not be tempted to exclaim, "Is that mere rhetoric?" No, not so. Each of the instances referred to by Chrysostom is drawn right out of the Scriptures.

"In all of its expressions, whether halting and short or flowing in beautiful, well-structured phrases, prayer is simply a conversation with God. If we turn prayer into a monologue or use it as a way to showcase our gift with words or as a venue for informing or instructing others who may be listening, we defeat the very purpose of prayer. The Bible makes it clear that prayer is intended as the line of connection **from the heart of the praying person directly to the heart of God.**" **Ravi Zacharias**

1. What is Prayer?

Prayer is intimate communion with God, a two-way relationship in which you spend **time talking to him/communing with Him and responding to Him**. Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God. Through it, we have access to our heavenly Father. Prayer is not a religious routine, but a way of getting to know God personally and powerfully. Explain why '*responding*' and not '*listening*' to Him.'

When we pray, we should expect the Holy Spirit to communicate with us. How does he do this? In various ways. He may **convict you** of a sin. He may **drop a thought** or an **impression** in your spirit. He may **bring something or someone to mind**, either so that you can pray about it or so that you can share something with him or her. He may **bring a picture or image to mind**. He may **remind you of a scripture** or **a song**. In other words, the Holy Spirit usually communicates with us through a variety of *promptings*; we need to respond to his promptings. The word ‘listening’ can be problematic for two reasons. First, many sincere believers try oh so hard to ‘hear God’s voice’, but eventually give up, concluding that ‘he does not speak to me’. The language we use—listening for God’s voice—seems to mislead their expectations. Second, other equally sincerely believers are ready to attribute any and every thought to ‘the voice of God’. It is dangerous to act as if God has spoken unless his speech was unmistakably clear (see Jer. 23:9-40). It seems safer, therefore, to say the Holy Spirit prompts us, and we respond to Him.

- A. Prayer is spending time in conversation with God.
- B. Prayer is the act of beseeching God earnestly for someone or something.
- C. Prayer involves communion with God and a recognition of His presence.
- D. Prayer involves availing ourselves to “hear” or respond to what God is saying.

God has an address, and it’s called praise. Therefore, when we want to commune with Him, and enjoy time in His Presence, praise and worship in general plays an important role in prayer.

Jesus makes reference to the Lord’s house:

And^{G2532} said^{G3004} unto them,^{G846} It is written,^{G1125} My^{G3450} house^{G3624} shall be called^{G2564} the house^{G3624} of prayer;^{G4335} but^{G1161} ye^{G5210} have made^{G4160} it^{G846} a den^{G4693} of thieves.^{G3027} (Mat 21:13)

House - Oikos (oy'-kos) - Of uncertain affinity; a **dwelling** (more or less extensive, literally or figuratively); by implication a **family** (more or less related, literally or figuratively): - **home, house (-hold)**, temple.

Prayer – proseuche⁻ (pros-yoo-khay'), From G4336; *prayer (worship)*; by implication an *oratory (chapel)*: - X pray earnestly, prayer.

Even them will I bring^{H935} to^{H413} my holy^{H6944} mountain,^{H2022} and make them joyful^{H8055} in my **house**^{H1004} **of prayer**:^{H8605} their burnt offerings^{H5930} and their sacrifices^{H2077} shall be accepted^{H7522} upon^{H5921} mine altar;^{H4196} for^{H3588} mine house^{H1004} shall be called^{H7121} an house^{H1004} of prayer^{H8605} for all^{H3605} people.^{H5971}
(Isa 56:7)

House – bayith (bah'-yith) - Probably from H1129 abbreviated; a *house* (in the greatest variation of applications, **especially family**, etc.): - court, daughter, door, + dungeon, family, + forth of, X great as would contain, hangings. home[born], [winter]house (-hold), inside(-ward), palace, place, + prison, + steward, + tablet, temple, web, + within (-out).

Prayer - t^ephilla^h, tef-il-law', From H6419; *intercession, supplication*; by implication a *hymn*: - prayer.

2. Why is it necessary to Pray?

a.) To grow in knowledge of and in relationship with the Lord.

Prayer is essential to a **healthy and vibrant spiritual life** because it is our only means of communing with the Lord. Through our fellowship with Him, we receive everything we need for life—**love from our Father, forgiveness from our Judge, comfort from our Counsellor, instructions from our General, and guidance from our Advisor, teaching from our Teacher, help from our Helper**, and so on.

Nobody has ever had as close a relationship with the Father as Jesus had. What was the secret of Jesus' intimacy with the Father? One secret was his amazing prayer life. The gospels often report that Jesus withdrew to lonely places to pray. His prayer life was so powerful that his disciples eventually came to him and asked,

'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1). If it was necessary for Jesus, the Son of God who was anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure, to spend much time in prayer, how much more it must be necessary for us to spend time in prayer!

Jesus Christ, who was the only perfect man, gave us a perfect example of communion with the Heavenly Father and, in doing so, demonstrated His absolute dependence on the Father. We will look more in depth at Jesus' example in due course.

b.) To enforce the dominion mandate man was given by God for the earth

"God does nothing except in response to believing prayer." John Wesley (Famous evangelist who spent 2 hours daily in prayer).

If God is all-powerful and sovereign, why pray? What difference will it make? I am glad you asked that question.

When God created the earth he gave us dominion and stewardship over it.

"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:28)

- The earth is ours to steward.
- If there is a problem, we have to take ownership of it and be the solution or provide the solution.
- If your car breaks down, what do you do?
- You get it fixed. Why? Because it's yours first of all and secondly because you urgently need it to run.
- The deception that creeps into the church is that (i) the earth and what happens here is not my problem... we have waiting for our ticket out of here and (ii) it isn't urgent coz we can still survive like it is.

A beautiful picture of this is seen in Jer 29v4-9:

"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell

*in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters-that you may be increased there, and not diminished. **And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.***"

peace" sha[^]lo[^]m

From H7999; *safe*, that is, (figuratively) *well, happy, friendly*; also (abstractly) *welfare*, that is, health, prosperity, peace: - X do, familiar, X fare, favour, + friend, X greet, (good) health, (X perfect, such as be at) peace (-able, -ably), prosper (-ity, -ous), rest, safe (-ly), salute, welfare, (X all is, be) well, X wholly.

Jesus teaches us that we need to ask for God's will to be done on earth:

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. (Mat 6:9-10)

c.) The Bible instructs us to do so

Jesus taught us to pray:

"And **when you pray**, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, **when you pray**, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And **when you pray**, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. **In this manner, therefore, pray:** Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

(Mat 6:5-10)

He didn't say "if you pray, pray like this...." He assumed we would pray... "when you pray...". He took it for granted... prayer is crucial, essential.

Listen to Paul's instructions to the Romans:

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, **continuing steadfastly in prayer**; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. (Rom 12:10-13)*

Listen to Paul's instruction to the church at Thessalonica:

*Rejoice always, **pray without ceasing**, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1Th 5:16-18)*

d.) We have many exemplary men and women of faith doing so in the Bible, with inspiring results.

Many great men of faith evidence vibrant prayer lives that we can glean from.

i.) Moses – We learn to position ourselves in obedience

- Positioned to hear God
- His heart was in a position of obedience no matter what it looked like in the natural.

*Now the **LORD spoke to Moses, saying:** "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.' Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honour over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." And they did so.*

(Initial faith and obedience)

***Now it was told the king of Egypt** that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the **children of Israel went out with boldness**. So the **Egyptians pursued them**, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon. And when Pharaoh drew near, the **children of Israel lifted their eyes**, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid,*

(What are you looking at? What are your eyes fixed on?)

and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?"

Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

(Who are you listening to?)

*And Moses said to the people, **"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."***

(Where did Moses get that from? He must have been walking in relationship with God, and God gave him an idea of what His intention was)

*And the LORD said to Moses, **"Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."***

(I love this, the Lord reminds Moses and helps Moses reposition his heart, reposition his gaze and what he is focused on)

And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went

*after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He **troubled the army of the Egyptians**. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." **Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen."** And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it.*

(Moses was positioned to receive instructions from His general. He positioned his heart so that he would obey no matter what. I think it was either God, or capture by the Egyptians)

*So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. **So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.***
(Exo 14:1-31)

The Date of the Exodus: 1446 BC

- Pharaoh who killed Hebrew children: Amunetep I: 1532-1511 BC
- Pharaoh's Daughter who adopted Moses: Hatshepsut: 1526 BC
- Pharaoh of Moses' flight to Midian: Thutmose III: 1486 BC
- Thutmose III/Hatshepsut: 1498-1485 BC
- Pharaoh of the Exodus: Thutmose III: 1486-1464 - 1431 BC
- Red sea crossing Straits of Tiran on the gulf of Aqaba on day 25
- Mt. Sinai: Jebel/Mt. Lawz in Saudi Arabia arriving on day 45 spending 11 months
- Kadesh Barnea at El Beidha beside modern Petra spending two years.
- Crossing the Jordan in 1406 BC, 40 years to the day they left Egypt.

Exodus Route

Egypt

Goshen
Tel el Dab'a, Avaris
30.787419° N
31.821367° E

Pyramids 2275 BC

Ballah, Timsah & Bitter Lakes crossing

Port of Suez crossing

Wilderness of Egypt Ezek 20:36

Succoth

Mt. Sin Bisher (Frantz)

Nuweiba Beach (Wyatt) crossing

Mt. Musa (Helena 325 AD)

Etham

Migdol

Straits of Tiran

Pi Hahiroth

Israel

Rhinoculura Tharu, Arish

Way of Horus

Egyptian Border Gen 15:18

Wadi El-Arish

Ein Qudeirat (Kadesh Barnea since 1916 AD)

Mt. Karkom

Jerusalem

Shittim

Dibon

Wadi Zered

Wilderness of Zin

Kadesh Barnea (Petra/El Beidha)

Mt. Hor

Seir

Paran

Ezion Geber

Mt. Khashm et-Tarif

Arabia

Wilderness of Paran

Wilderness of Sinai

Marah

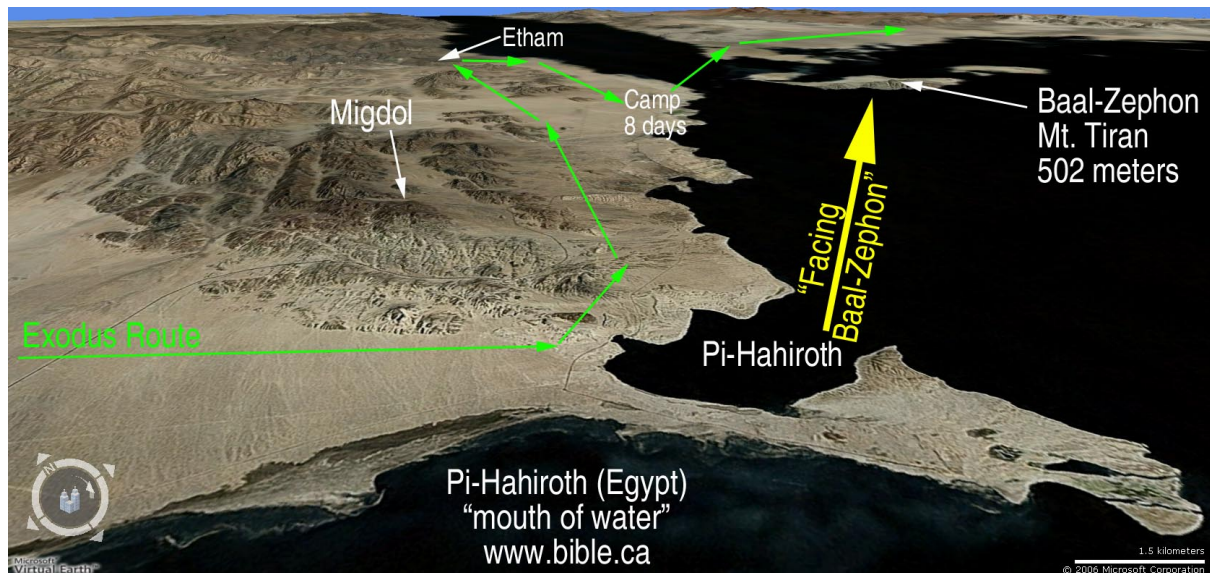
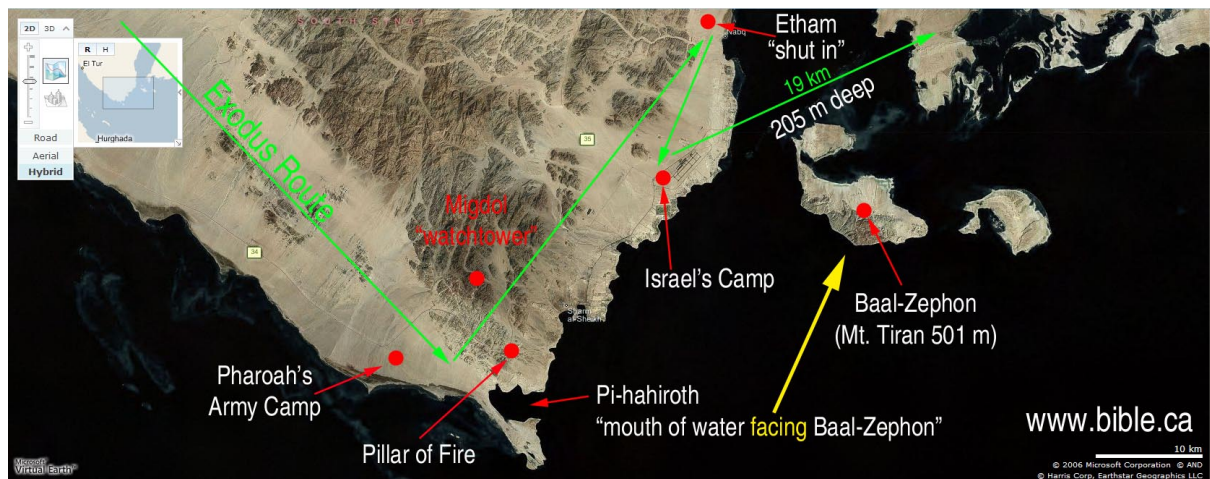
Wilderness of Sin

Rephidim (Meribah)

Mt. Sinai (Al-Lawz)

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Steve Rudd 2006

Image courtesy of NASA



So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. (Exo 13:20)

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'

Sometimes the place of obedience is the least obvious choice. Sometimes it looks the most foolish.

The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man, and the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of man... in other words, strength and wisdom and victory will always come from complete obedience regardless of how it looks to our natural eyes.