

Overcoming Immaturity in Prayer (Part 2)

Last week I shared with you six signs of immaturity in prayer and how to overcome them. This week I will continue with the next six. It is crucial for us to identify immaturity in our lives. We tend to do this in other aspects of life and as a result we develop solutions. However, when it comes to prayer, many see it as something very personal that people can express in whatever form. However, there is a scriptural standard for maturity in how we relate to God and in these sermons, we are attempting to highlight this. By God's grace we will go to our next level of prayer as we put away childish ways. Let's remember that whilst we are called to have a childlike faith we need to do away with childish behaviour.

7. Only praying one type of prayer

When immature, the focus is on one type of prayer, for example making petitions. The mature prayer warrior embraces all kinds of prayer and knows when to use them (supplication, decrees, thanksgivings etc.)

Ephesians 6:18 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 Lord's people.

If you were in a battle, would you use a submarine if your enemy had aircraft? Would you use an army tank if you are dealing with an enemy that is under water or in a ship somewhere? You will lose the battle if you are not using the right weapon. God has given us different types of prayer and it is crucial for us to be able to use them when it's relevant. John G. Lake was used by God phenomenally in Southern Africa. At some point, he wrote back to the USA about the miracles he had been witnessing. He said instead of praying intercessory prayers for healing, they had shifted into warfare. This was key in the proliferation of miracles he saw in his ministry. It is important to have the kind of understanding to know when to pray the prayer of faith or to rebuke a spirit. It is important to know which weapon to use when because it determines the breakthrough. There are many situations where people think that God sees the heart and because you are praying into situations, it will work out. God wants us to be skilled spiritual snipers who seek His face and know how to pray accurately. **How you pray matters.**

8. Your prayer motive is self-glorifying or only partially for God's Glory

Some Christians can say they give God the glory but in the very same sentence, they want to get the same glory. **The search for significance in life is a powerful driving force with regards to our success but it can also disqualify us as watchmen and intercessors. Has your desire to leave a mark on this earth exceeded your love for people?** If you want breakthrough in your life and go from a place of being mediocre you need to go through the school of the glory of God. This is where the desire for glory and praise from people dies and you are consumed with the glory of God. You will do all things for God's glory alone. Make God's glory be your ultimate goal. If you are about to start a business, school, about to get a promotion; whatever it is; **be consumed with the glory of God because God is interested in His glory.** This is a basic foundation that is often not taught. **When God's glory is the sole motive for prayer you will not be offended when people don't recognize you because this was never your goal. Sometimes we are more concerned about our personal vindication than God's glory.**

John 14:12-14 Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Jesus' motive for answering prayers that are prayed in His name is to glorify the Father through the Son. The prayers He answers are the ones that give God the glory. **It is important to find out the things that glorify the Father because those are the things you need to pray in the name of Jesus so that God is glorified.** If I am praying prayers that are self-glorifying or glorify someone else, how can Jesus answer those prayers?

James 4:2-3 ²*You crave what you do not have. You kill and covet, but are unable to obtain it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask.* ³*And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures.*

The Bible says that His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness. In Colossians 2:10, we are told that we are complete in Christ. Unfortunately, many Christians crave what they already have in Christ and this is one of the causes of jealousy and undermining what we already have. Ask God to show you what you need to pray for in order for you to glorify the Father.

9. You lack discretion

Discretion is knowing when to say what. God needs to be able to trust us with what He shows us. That is why Paul talks about guarding the mysteries of God. He is not playing hide and seek with us but He needs to trust us. Just because God gives you a dream or a vision pertaining to someone does not mean that the first thing is to call that person because you want to impress them with your spirituality. The first thing you need to do is to ask yourself if you are willing to pray it through and ask God for clarity on the matter. The mature praying person only talks when God says to speak. A good way to keep your words in check is to ask God what you need to do with certain information. Sometimes God is showing you something so that you may be prayerful. Often he is giving you more fodder for prayer.

2 Corinthians 12:3-4 *And I know that this man—whether in the body or out of it I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up into Paradise. The things he heard were too sacred for words, things that man is not permitted to tell. If you seek the praise and recognition of man maybe that will end up your reward alone.*

Sometimes we have visions or encounters, sometimes it is difficult to tell whether it was a dream or a vision or a real incident. Here we see that there are certain things that require discernment on whether it should be released or not. **To the degree to which we are faithful with that which He gives us and we do what He wants us to do with it, He gives us more.** This is because **it is God's desire to give us more.**

10. You are afraid of the Devil

Do not be intimidated by the enemy, rather be the individual who intimidates the enemy. When you walk into a city or a town, demons must tremble. The devil's concern is not whether or not you are a Christian; he wants to know whether you know your authority. Many Christians today are being harassed by the enemy and he enjoys playing mind games with them. The enemy wants to instil fear in you first in order to gain a foothold in your life. Witchdoctors try to place fear and once a person has fear, the enemy gains a foothold in their lives. If you are a child of God and you invite fear, the kingdom of darkness can find a way into your life.

The sons of Sceva were beaten up by demons because the demons had no idea who they were (Acts 19:11-20). The sons of Sceva did not know who they were in Christ and the authority they carried. They failed to establish their authority and they were beaten. Christians can become so used to being anxious and fearful and they think it is part of their personality. God wants to take us to a place where we are mature in our prayer and take authority over the enemy. Jaedyn said to me yesterday, "We played better Water Polo when we knew we could beat the other team." The devil is powerful but has no authority over you unless you give him so he resorts to trickery. A 30tonne truck has to stop based on an instruction from a tiny traffic policeman.

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Why would the devil flee from someone he is not afraid of? Many Christians are not walking in righteousness and are not submitting to God or the local church. **You cannot exercise legitimate authority if you are not under authority.** Many cults that have started in the New Age have founders of women who stepped out of from the cover of their husbands. They no longer submitted to their husband's authority. The authority we have over the devil is because we are in Christ Jesus. James tells us to resist the devil. Some people are dealing with things that are spiritual in nature but they argue about them in the flesh. The enemy is not your spouse or parent. We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against powers, principalities and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

11. You focus on the Devil too much

After the first lesson of spiritual warfare, some people see demons on every doorknob! I remember some friends of ours, they had a baby born and the baby had a birthmark on his forehead and some people in the church were treating it like it was the mark of the beast in Revelation. In the area of spiritual warfare, people can become spiritually weird. Do not focus too much on the devil. The mature believer focuses on Jesus and His life is centred on Jesus. There are some Christians who feel called to tear down everything in spiritual warfare and they only have one tool in prayer. **If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything will become a nail in your eyes. This is true in life and true in prayer.**

Colossians 1:17-19 *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.* ¹⁸*And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence.* ¹⁹*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.*

Jesus has pre-eminence in our speech, not the devil. Do not be afraid of the devil, do not focus on him. Resist the devil while you are submitted to God and he will flee. Some people only have negative visions and dreams. They never talk about smelling God's sweet aroma.

12. You pray carelessly whatever you feel

The mature person prays the will of God. If you go to the bank and they ask you how much you want, they will give you whatever you have asked based on your request. Sometimes if you keep insisting on something that might not be His will for you, He might still give you. Remember the children of Israel with the quail. They got tired of manna, and they insisted on meat (Numbers 11). In the end, they did not want the quail anymore. You might be insisting and twisting God's arm on certain things and God ends up leaving you to your own devices. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman and He does not force things on us. That is why we have to be careful of what we release through prayer.

When people would go to Jesus for healing, He would ask them what they wanted. **Often God meets you at your level of request.** The time when blind Bartimaeus met Jesus, he could have asked for something different such as a nicer space for him to receive donations. Jesus could discern what he wanted but He went on to ask Bartimaeus what He wanted. God wants you to join Him in agreement concerning your life. He does not want to impose His agenda on us. He wants us to engage with Him, to respond, desire and to pray His agenda. Could it be that maybe you have a desire or habit you are insisting on but you are blind to any counsel concerning moving in a different direction? God might just leave you to the stubbornness of your own heart.

When you are mature in prayer, you wait on the Lord, engage and ask God to speak to you concerning His will.

1 John 5:14 - 15 ¹⁴*And this is the confidence that we have before Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.* ¹⁵*And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we*

already possess what we have asked of Him. You shift from good to great in prayer when you know how to seek His face for His will. You then pray from that place of confidence.

If we are asking for what is not in accordance to His will, we are not guaranteed that He is hearing us. Knowing that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we already possess that which we have asked of Him. It is easier to pray the prayer of faith when you know whether it is God's will or not. If I have already told you that I want to give you my spare pairs of shoes, it is easier for you to remind me boldly and come and collect them. You know my will. Knowledge of God's will produces boldness, yet many believers fail to tarry until they are clear about His will.