

Overcoming Immaturity in Prayer (Part 1)

Many times, I have seen people desiring breakthrough and praying, but their prayers do not get answered. In 1999, I went to a particular country and I was wondering what was going on in the nation as they were going through challenges but there were strong intercessors. On the outside, these intercessors were powerful, but God told me that many were praying the wrong prayers. If people are immature in their prayers, they may pray hard but fail to get results. In this message I discuss nine signs of immaturity in prayer and what to do about them. We will discuss the other nine in the next message.

1 Corinthians 13:11 *When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*

There are numerous Christians who have been in the faith for years but they continue to think, reason and speak like children. There is a way in which a grown up speaks and reasons. When it comes to prayer, there is need to do away with immature ways. **When you are immature in your prayer life, it is a reflection of your general immaturity spiritually because prayer is central to our walk with Jesus.**

Signs of Immaturity in Prayer

1. Only praying about things relating to Yourself

This is praying only when it comes to personal breakthrough. **Immature prayer asks, “Lord bless me.” Mature prayer asks, “Lord what is on Your heart?”** It is important to pray with as much enthusiasm when you are praying for your city or church as you do when you are praying for personal breakthrough. You need to get to the stage where you carry the Lord’s burdens. The Bible tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). Could it be that we are spending too much time seeking things and not the Kingdom? You can ask God what seeking the Kingdom first looks like in your life. It can be easy to have a consumer mentality where people come to church to get breakthrough without contributing anything. Many places would shut down in the Body of Christ if the ministers stopped preaching about how people can get their needs met. After you become healthy and fixed, surely you should be doing something for Jesus. God can genuinely bless you when you respond in faith but it is sad when people backslide after receiving their breakthrough. This is because their mentality was immature. The devil is aware that very often human beings participate in religious activities because of what they want to get out of it in their lives. That is why Satan went to God to talk about Job.

Job 1:6-11 *One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. ⁷The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”⁸ Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”⁹ “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. ¹⁰ “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹ But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”*

The immature prayer person only prays when times are difficult or when under pressure to pray because of what they want. Once they have it, they relax. The person who is mature in prayer carries the Lord’s burdens. **When your prayer life revolves only around your needs, you have not yet discovered the burden of the Kingdom.** It is easier to pray when you have to release the burden of the Lord. It is difficult to pray from a place where there is no burden. If you are carrying your own burdens, it is practically impossible to carry the Lord’s burden. To mature in prayer, we have to make ourselves available to God and ask what burdens we are to carry. God will place the burdens on us and we begin to pray them. *Could it be that we are not fully aware of what is on God’s heart because we are consumed with what is on our heart?* **The shift from childish prayer to mature prayer happens when God’s concerns become your concerns.**

Breakthrough often begins when you start praying for God's agenda, not just your own.

Galatians 4:19 NLT *Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labour pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.*

Labour pains are not something you can manufacture. Paul positioned himself as the spiritual parent to the Galatians. There is a link between the burden we carry, the burden we release and the nature of the relationship with the people we are praying for. Paul was agonising and groaning until Christ was fully formed in their lives. God is looking for intercessors that will carry His burdens and pray with enthusiasm and zeal for things that do not necessarily directly relate to them. After you start birthing things in the spirit, God will give you more. Years later, you will start seeing those very areas you were praying for, linking up with your own life.

2. Only praying anxiety-based prayers

One of the greatest signs of immaturity in prayer is only praying anxiety-based prayers. If you want prayers that get results, shift from praying prayers that are filled with fear and anxiety to those that are filled with faith. When we are feeling anxious, we should pray, but many people remain in a place of anxiety. God responds to faith and brokenness. **Faith-filled prayers move heaven; fear-filled prayers often recycle anxiety.**

God does not respond to panic; He responds to faith mixed with thanksgiving.

Mature intercessors pray from conviction, not from emotional turbulence.

It is important to study scripture to see what makes God respond. Weeping a lot, on its own does not get God's attention.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves.....

This is brokenness. **You can pray and weep with a proud heart, but God does not respond to haughtiness.** Pray faith based prayers mixed with thanksgiving and requests.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

When you pray the prayer of faith, you are thanking God passionately because you believe that He has already done it. Sometimes we do not get results in our prayers because our prayers are not mixed with thanksgiving. Faith is acknowledging that it has already happened in the spirit. Supplication with thanksgiving is where you have mixed the requests you have made with thanksgiving in advance. We tend to thank God for what has already happened instead of also thanking God in advance for what is yet to come because of what He will do.

Mark 11:24 *Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

If you cannot see in the spirit that it is yours, then you are not walking in faith. Believe that it is a done deal and it will be yours. This verse does not say that *hopefully all things being equal and you experience favour with your boss and your wife, then maybe perhaps if God is in a good mood, it will be yours.* There should not be any ifs and buts, just believe you have received it. Create it first in the spirit realm and it will be yours.

Psalms 5:3 *In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.*

A child does not ask for something and think that you will not do it. They wait expectantly and they actually think you will do it sooner. That is why we talk about the need to have childlike faith.

James 1:6 *But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

You can only have confidence in prayer when you know God's will. Many people are not confident because they have not sought God's face to understand His will for their lives. When we are convinced of God's will for our lives, then we can pray in faith. Sometimes we cry and weep concerning things that God has already given us.

3. Operating in the Ministry of Accusation

Revelation 12:10 *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.*

The accuser is Satan. **When your prayers are filled with accusation, you are speaking Satan's language instead of Christ's.** Christians have access to the throne of God as they play an intercessory function. Sometimes we abuse this access and we come before God with the ministry of accusation. **If your prayers expose people more than they restore them, you may be praying from the wrong spirit.** If your spouse does something wrong to you, God already knows what has happened. The right prayer to make is to cry out to God for mercy so that there might be a breakthrough in the situation. **If we want the Holy Spirit to help us and to pray through us, we have to be praying in the same spirit as Jesus. When you come before God with the ministry of accusation, the Holy Spirit does not help you.** Other spirits that like accusation may eventually find an opportunity to latch on. If you want to be mature in prayer, you should be praying what Jesus is praying about.

4. Using Vain Words and Repetitions

Matthew 6:7–8 *And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

Pagans were religious people worshiping foreign Gods. People in that time became Christians but some did not stop the pagan practices. God is not into beautiful prayers; He responds to faith and brokenness. **Prayer is not performance before God—it is communion with Him.** You can be praying in broken English and God hears it because He hears the language of faith. There is no need to try to impress God.

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Someone who recognises their need for mercy is not someone who is perfect, but they can be confident. We rely on the grace of God. Being confident based on the good deeds you have done is not what should make you bold. **God is impressed by Christ in you and nothing else.** That is why we pray in the name of Jesus. That is also why we shouldn't pray prayers that Jesus wouldn't make. That is why we have to find out what is on the heart of Jesus. When you say in the name of Jesus, you are saying in Jesus' stead. Make sure your confidence is also not in some formula such as holy water.

5. Praying from a Place of Pride and Self-righteousness

Confidence in prayer should come from Christ's righteousness, not your spiritual achievements.

Luke 18:9-14 *And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' ¹³"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the*

sinner!’¹⁴“I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Self-righteous prayer advertises your goodness instead of seeking God’s mercy. Watch your source of confidence. Make sure you do not get into the flesh. **Trust in His promises not your eloquence or zeal.**

Matthew 6:7 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your father who is unseen. Then your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

The most powerful prayers often come from the most humble hearts.

6. Your Revelation is limited to one Aspect of God

Usually this takes place if you have been raised in a background that emphasises one aspect of God. If you only know God as your provider and disciplinarian, that will be the only way you can relate to God. Your view of God can be limited. **Your prayer life can never exceed your revelation of God.**

The more you discover God’s nature, the richer and deeper your prayers become.

As a mature prayer warrior, you recognize God’s manifold nature. As I have mentioned earlier, there are many different dimensions to God, which are displayed through His names found in the Bible. This revelation brings maturity to your prayer. **If you only know one dimension of God, your prayers will be limited to that dimension.**

Ephesians 3:10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...

7. Only Praying One type of Prayer

Effective intercession is not random; it is strategic. When one is immature in prayer, 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, vows, consecration 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.

An immature prayer warrior uses one prayer for everything; a mature one knows which prayer to use when. 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. Victory often depends not just on praying—but on praying accurately.** That’s why the bible says in James, “You pray amiss...”

8. Your Prayer Motive is Self-glorifying

Some Christians can say they give God the glory but in the very same sentence, they want to get the same glory. 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.

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? **If the goal of your prayer is your glory, heaven has no reason to answer it.**

The prayers God answers most readily are the ones that magnify His name.

Mature prayer shifts from “make me great” to “make Your name great.”

James 4:2-3 *²You 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. ³And 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. **When God's glory becomes your motive, your prayer life enters a new dimension.**