



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 40, No. 24, June 17, 2014 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is a weekly Bible Study, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

An Intimate Hour with God

by Jim Elliff

The Lord invites us to know Him better. What a privilege! If the joy of heaven is in knowing the Lord's presence without any sin to hinder us, surely seeking His presence now must be the greatest possible pursuit.

Do you feel your need to pray? A person who has no need to pray cannot be living by faith. Prayerless-ness says, "I am sufficient in myself for everything required of me." But is that so? And do you not grieve God by your persistent self-sufficiency? The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." (Heb. 11:6)

The following suggestions are designed to help you spend an extended time in prayer and meditation with God. You may spend this hour alone or with others. The order is not essential, but does provide a helpful way to progress. This tool may be used daily or for special times of retreat with God. Some may wish to follow this hour with more intense Bible reading.

It is sometimes good to kneel or to lie down before the Lord. "Come let us bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our God, our Maker." (Ps. 95: 6) Walking while praying can also be helpful, or sitting in a comfortable chair so that all the focus can be on God. Be sure and find a quiet place.

1. Come in Christ's Name

The audience we have with the Father is entirely based upon the merits of Christ. In other words, it is solely because Christ lived perfectly, died satisfactorily, and rose again victoriously for us that we have the privilege of addressing the Father. Because God accepts Christ, He can accept us in Him. "...He made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1: 6b)

Don't just say the words, but actually trust in Christ as your mediator. Express in some detail your dependence on Christ's worthiness and on His substitutionary work on your behalf.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ....For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2:13, 18)

2. *Delight in Him*

Express your wonder and delight in God. Praise Him for His character and His power. Do not thank him at this time for His activity in your life, but focus on the person of God and His attributes: His Love, Patience, Immensity, Strength, Holiness, Grace, Glory, Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, etc.

"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Ps. 37: 4)

3. *Express Your Longings to Him*

Tell God what you desire above all other things. Express your deepest longings for fellowship with Him and for holiness of life, or whatever is in your heart. This is not a time to pray about everything you need, but to make known your deepest, long-term desires. You may wish to personalize Ephesians 1: 15-23 as a guide.

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (Ps. 42: 1-2a)

4. *Read a Psalm*

You may wish to use one of the "Psalms for the day," according to the day of the month. Add 30 to the day of the month to arrive at 5 Psalms for the day (i.e. on the 15th, the Psalms would be 15, 45, 75, 105, and 135). It may be helpful to read the Psalm you choose out loud.

5. *Sing to Him*

Use a hymnbook, recall a chorus or hymn from memory, or make up your own song from the Scriptures.

"Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." (Ps. 100: 1-2)

6. Intercede for Others

Remember...

Those who have asked you to pray for them
 The leaders of your church
 The missionaries you know
 The leaders of our country
 Those who are unsaved
 Your family members
 Your friends
 Those in trouble or grieving, etc.

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you..." (1 Sam. 12: 23)

7. Place Your Day Before Him

If you are praying in the morning, you may wish to place every aspect of the day before the Lord, one item at a time. "Lord, please give me patience with my daughter when she comes to breakfast, help me show her love and kindness." "Lord, when I try to make that sale at 2:00 this afternoon, help me to speak as a Christian would speak, and give me wisdom." By going chronologically through every possible event of the day, you are learning trust Him in the details of life.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Pr. 3: 5-6)

8. Petition Him for Other Special Needs

There are matters needing attention in your own life and in the lives of others, the church or your group. Tell these to God and ask for His guidance, deliverance, endurance, wisdom, or whatever it is that you need. It is at this time that you will want to deal with any repentance God is requiring. Expect Him to give you grace to overcome. "Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3: 19b) Ask with faith and genuine humility.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4: 16)

"...Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (Jn. 16: 24b)

9. Meditate on His Word

To meditate means to ponder, reflect, contemplate, or think over slowly, the Words of God. If this is your only Bible reading time, continue reading the passage that is next for you in your plan. Read at least a chapter of Scripture. Look for the key verses and meditate on them, asking God to show you what they mean. Mark them in your Bible and ask God to help you remember what He is showing. Pray that He will give you a way to humbly share these truths with others. Read to obey.

If you are in a group, allow a period of quiet so that each person may read the Word. The leader may wish to suggest the passage for use with the group. If there is time, insights may be shared with each other.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." (Ps. 1: 1-3)

10. Offer Thanks to Him

Even if there have been difficulties in your life, the Lord has been good to you. Express to God your appreciation for specific acts of kindness He has done in the light of what you truly deserve.

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." (Heb. 13: 15)

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Jesus STILL has a master passion— REGARDLESS OF EVENTS ON EARTH!

A look at the last chapters of the Bible reveals the bottom line ultimate purpose of all human history— All the redeemed [Jew and Gentile: Ephesians 2:11-22; Revelation 21:9-14] as the Bride/wife of the Lamb, seeing Him, serving Him, reigning with Him for eternity. (Revelation 22:1-7) THIS IS GOD'S STATED PRIMARY AGENDA.

Acts 4:23-33: The early disciples of Jesus understood and embraced God's primary agenda of spreading the GOSPEL! **Thus, when persecuted for the gospel's sake, they made the right response:**

1. Acts 4:24— they began with Praise to God! **2. Acts 4:25**— they 'prayed Scripture'... which gave them a right perspective: The heathen are raging! Realized or not the lost world's rants against and persecutions of Christians are in reality expressions of hatred against JESUS! (Acts 4:25-27) **3. Acts 4:28**— they embraced the sovereignty of God in their prayer!

4. Acts 4:29-30— **they did not pray for personal safety. [NOTE:** The focus of this article is not 'how far one should or should not go' in self defense. We are simply reporting the Model of these dynamic Christians! **Note: In fact, as to seeking to be wise about the future— it is a good thing to go to the ant and be wise! Proverbs 6:6-8; 30:25]**

5. Acts 4:29-30— **they prayed for the LORD to behold the threats of their enemies; and they prayed that the LORD grant them ALL boldness in speaking the Word of God!** And they asked that the LORD send forth healing power, signs and wonders to be done in the name of Jesus.

6. Acts 4:31-33— **They were all given a FRESH FILLING of the Holy Spirit! As a result,** they went forth preaching God's message with boldness; and great generosity, love, power and grace was upon them all!

7. Their singular passion was not their safety, but for BOLDNESS to preach the gospel! **What is my passion?**

IN THE MIDST OF THE DEEPENING DARKNESS— HOW CAN WE IMPACT OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST?

1. LOOKING through the Acts of the Apostles— how did the New Testament Church impact their world? **2.** What do the New Testament Epistles call for from believers? **3.** What do the special letters of Jesus in Revelation 2-3 call for from believers? **4.** How does one 'ADORN' the Gospel? **5.** What causes the Gospel to be BLASPHEMED? **6. What direction** and wisdom can we glean from: Acts 2:37-47; 4:5-33; 5; 6; 8:1-

4; 12:1-12? **7. Let us pay close attention to** Acts 4:18-33; Acts 4:23-31; Acts 12:12; Acts 21:5!

TRUE REALITY:

Local congregations in the Book of Acts

often gathered for united prayer!

SHOULDN'T WE DO AS THEY DID?

All over America - **and this is TRUE at Southside** - the church-wide prayer meeting is the LEAST ATTENDED meeting of the church. Many churches no longer have a specific Prayer Meeting. Those who do—it's just a few who show up. **BUT SOMETIMES, EVEN IN AMERICA, A CHURCH REALLY 'GETS IT!'**

"THEY WILL ALL BE THERE!"

Dr. David Gibbs of the Christian Law Association got surprised one Wednesday. His background is Baptist. Few Baptists are faithful to church-wide prayer meetings. **But for this particular Wednesday night, a pastor of a Mennonite church had scheduled Dr. Gibbs to speak during their Wednesday night Prayer Service.**

The church family DID NOT KNOW that a guest speaker was coming. The Pastor was driving Dr. Gibbs from the airport to the church building. Dr. Gibbs was trying to prepare himself for what he is about to face, so he asked: *"Pastor, what do you expect tonight in the way of who might show up for the meeting? Pastor, I know it's Wednesday night... and folks do not know I'm coming... I just want you to be at ease, because I'm happy to come and the size of the crowd does not matter..."*

The pastor simply said, "They will all be there!"

So, Dr. Gibbs translated that 'response' into his Baptist experience and figured that a few would show up for a holy huddle. **They arrived. The building was a plain, unattractive block building. The parking lot was full. Dr. Gibbs entered and found bare concrete floors and bare metal folding chairs— OVER 400 HUNDRED metal folding chairs— and they were all filled with the REGULAR PRAYER MEETING CROWD! As the pastor had earlier stated,**

"They will all be there!"... And they were! These were farming people with crops to plant, or tend, or harvest. Their days were always long and

their work was never done. **HOWEVER, EVERY WEEK on Prayer Meeting Night— THEY WERE ALL THERE! Stunned**, Dr. Gibbs turned to the pastor and asked, "Please explain this to me?"

"Well, Bro. Gibbs,

(1) **We are all family;**

(2) **We are responsible for one another;**

(3) **We are commanded to pray for one another;**

(4) And we also realize that **we need God's wisdom and power** if we are to make a difference in our community in reaching others for Christ— **So, we have just as many for Prayer meeting as we do for other Church-wide services... And, at our Prayer Meeting**, the main agenda is PRAYER. We actually spend most of the time praying for each other and for those in the world to whom we seek to reach and minister!"

THEREFORE, CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER SERVICE REALITY FOR SOUTHSIDE:

The issue is - (1) Not lack of time, (2) Not how tired we are, (3) Not a thousand other excuses—

(4) The issue that each of us has to face up to is this: ***What is the level of my LOVE, VISION, PRIORITY and DEPENDANCE UPON GOD!***

This Mennonite congregation understood it. The church in New Testament days understood it. LET US FOLLOW THEIR GODLY EXAMPLE!

GODLY PURPOSE:

1. We must REST in God and His sovereignty and be focused on His agenda even as was the New Testament Church.

2. We must pray TOGETHER as a congregation because a FOUNDATIONAL ESSENTIAL for genuine Christianity is to RETURN TO OUR OWN GROUP AND CRY OUT TO GOD— **ACTS 4: 23-33!**

3. Presently we have two opportunities for an expression of **CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER:**

**** 7:00pm on Wednesdays in the CHURCH AUDITORIUM!**

**** SOME SUNDAYS @ 1:00pm EARLY AFTERNOON SERVICE** in the fellowship hall— after our noon fellowship meal, (at approximately 1:00pm), we pray for one another, for others and for Missionaries:

BOTTOM LINES: From the example of the Mennonite congregation; and from the examples of the New Testament Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles— IS IT NOT OBVIOUS that we MUST greatly upgrade our commitment to church-wide prayer meetings? Let this be upon EVERY SOUTHSIDER HEART— WE MUST ALL come together for a CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER MEETING!

LAST WEDNESDAY EVENING WITH ODELL SUMMER— we had a good sized group to attend. Surely the LORD spoke clearly to us of the profound need that missionaries have for prayer support!

UNLESS YOU ARE TRULY PROVIDENTIALY HINDERED—I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING ONE AND ALL THIS WEDNESDAY AT 7PM... IN THE AUDITORIUM! REMEMBER:

(1) We are all family;

(2) We are responsible for one another;

(3) We are commanded to pray for one another;

(4) And we MUST also realize that we need God's wisdom and power if we are to make a difference in our community in reaching others for Christ — **So, we SHOULD have just as many for Prayer meeting as we do for other Church-wide services... And, at our Prayer Meeting,** the main agenda is PRAYER. We DO and WILL actually spend most of the time praying for each other and for those in the world to whom we seek to reach and minister!"

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Questions call Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM; **IN THE CHURCH AUDITORIUM!** NOTE: Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be with their parents in the Prayer Service. YOUTH GROUP: Wednesdays 6-8pm... led by Byron Smith

☐ **NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Thursday, June 19, 11:00AM,** led by Cindy Bell

* **SATURDAY MORNINGS** @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! *

*** SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 22 and 29

1. 9:30am- Sunday School Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

** **JUNE 22**— LORD'S SUPPER; no meal or afternoon service at church.

HOME MEETINGS— Sunday afternoon/evening!

** **JUNE 29**— No meal or afternoon service at church. CHURCH-WIDE SINGING, PRAISE, SCRIPTURE READING, TESTIMONIES AT 6:00pm

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**SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL!** Children are like young plants in a garden— while young and tender they must be protected. Southside Christian School works in harmony with the local Church and empowers parents!

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>

Grace to all! James Bell