

ENJOYING EXTRA GRACE BY HAVING SET TIMES OF PRAYER AND LEARNING TO PRAY INTERCESSORY PRAYERS INITIATED BY GOD

- We need to give the Lord the opportunity to give us particular experiences of grace by having set times of prayer
- We need to determine the best time according to our schedule to have set times for prayer so we can seek God and reach God
- We need to learn how to intercede for what is in God's heart by inquiring of Him until we sense an echo within and know He is praying in our prayer

Extra Grace That Comes with Set Times of Prayer

If we mean business and set aside a period of time to contact God every day, we will receive many unexpected blessings. God has reserved much grace for us, but we have been too busy. We have never set aside the time for God. Hence, God does not have a way to reach us. If we would set aside some time every day, not merely to pray or to breathe in God but to open ourselves before Him, we will open a door for God to do many things in us. No other time can be compared with our prayer time. The most precious things happen to us when we pray. If we would spend some time before God, not to speak to Him and not to ask Him to do things for us but to give Him the opportunity to speak to us and to do things in us, many wonderful and mysterious things will happen to us during that time. We will see visions, we will know ourselves, and God will unveil mysteries concerning His Word and grant us understanding (2:17). He will even grant us burdens and gifts that we did not possess. We will receive a special portion of grace as a special kind of enlightenment or as a rebuke, cleansing, or dealing. During this period of time God will speak and operate in us.

Therefore, this period of time is indispensable. If we take away this time, we will be deprived of opportunities to receive grace and of opportunities for God to work in us. We need to be impressed that since we know how to enjoy God, we must set aside a specific time to practice. If we fail, we will suffer great loss in our life. Whether the saints are old or young, brothers or sisters, we will all suffer a great loss if we do not spend some time before the Lord. The wisest thing for us to do is to spend some time before the Lord. We can spend one, three, seven, or even more times a day to absorb God. However, it is better not to set aside too many times a day initially. If we set aside too many times a day, we may be able to maintain it for a few days, but eventually it will become a legality to us, and we will fail. Some have practiced praising seven times a day. In my youth I also practiced this. But after a while I could not bear the burden any longer, because it became a law to me. It is best not to set too high a standard. However, we need to come before the Lord at least once every day. If we practice this, we will receive much profit.

The Time to Pray Being Determined by One's Own Choice

The time of prayer should be determined according to a person's schedule. There is nothing legal related to this time. Peter prayed at noon, and Cornelius prayed at the ninth hour. We know that Daniel prayed three times a day, but we do not know at what times. There is no legal time. Some would rather spend time in the morning before their work to breathe in God. Others are very busy during the day and have time only in the afternoon. For them to devote twenty or thirty minutes during that period of time to absorb God is a good choice. Some sisters work at home, and it is not easy for them to find time early in the morning. They may need to wait until their children and husband leave the house and they finish their morning chores, maybe around ten o'clock in the morning. Because it is too early for them to be occupied with lunch preparation, they spend some time to quietly breathe in God. There may be some who, like Cornelius, set aside time between three and four in the afternoon. A person should determine the time that he sets aside.

When George Müller was asked why he devoted his mornings to the Lord, he answered that in offering a sacrifice to God, one must offer the choicest portion of fat. In contacting God we must offer the choicest part of our time. There is no set rule as to what is the choicest part of our time. With some it is the early morning. With others it is after the noon break. The decision is left to each individual.

Seeking after God

During this time of absorbing God, we should not worry about so many things. There is no need to mention many things in our prayer. The more we pray for different things the less we touch God, the less we reach Him. Please pay attention to the word *reach*. When we pray, we must reach God....Being concerned about many things when we pray prevents us from reaching God. In order to gain God, we must drop everything. The first point in enjoying God through prayer is to appear before Him, to seek after Him. We do not go to God to pray for things; we go to Him to seek after Him. We look for God, touch Him, and contact Him. God is Spirit, and He lives in our spirit. When we pray, we must learn to turn inward, to return to our spirit to seek after God. We must turn to our spirit to touch Him. Once we touch Him in our spirit, we pray. This prayer reaches God.

Inquiring of God

After worshipping and praising God, we must learn to inquire of God. We should ask if He wants us to pray about a certain matter. We should not immediately pray about different matters. Rather, we should first have a discussion with Him, asking Him if we should pray for a certain matter. All

prayers should be initiated by God. He should be the one who initiates them within us. Abraham's intercession before God in Genesis 18 is a model intercessory prayer. God wanted to destroy Sodom; however, He wanted to save Lot, and He needed a man to intercede for Lot. Everything that God wants to do to man and every grace that He intends to bestow on man can be fulfilled only after man prays. This is an unchanging principle. God intended to save Lot, but He needed a man to pray. Who could He find? He could find only Abraham, a man who lived before God.

There are two precious portions in Genesis 18. The first is "Abraham walked with them [God and the angels] to send them away" (v. 16). This is a sweet word...On the one hand, God visited Abraham; He ate, drank, and fellowshiped with him as a friend in his tent. On the other hand, Abraham sent God off also like a friend...They behaved like two intimate friends who were unable to part. There are certain things that God does not reveal until we walk a distance with Him. If Abraham had not walked a distance with God that day, God would not have had a way to save Lot...When we visit friends, it is easy for us to tell them what we are doing for them. But it is not easy to ask them to do something for us...Although God wanted Abraham to do something for Him, it was not easy for Him to say anything, because He did not know if Abraham was willing to do it. He did not know whether Abraham was one with Him in His inward parts. It was as if God said that He was leaving, but Abraham would not let Him go; he walked with God. Then God stopped and said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" (Gen. 18:17)...Abraham was a man living before God, and he understood God's heart. He knew that though God did not mention Lot, He cared for Lot. Here we find the second precious word: "Abraham remained standing before Jehovah" (v. 22)...While he was standing before Him, he prayed. This prayer was intercessory prayer. Such intercessory prayer is fully initiated by God and motivated by Him. It is conceived out of fellowship with God, out of touching His heart...The subject of that intimate talk and riddle between God and Abraham was Lot. But God did not say that it was Lot, and Abraham did not expose it either. On the surface both were speaking about Sodom. Actually, they were speaking about Lot's deliverance. Abraham's intercession truly touched God's heart.

I hope that we would see that as we breathe in God, we should learn to touch God's heart. We should not bring many things to God, nor should we ask for many things. If we do, God will disappear, and we will not touch Him. We must learn to stop our being and touch the burden within God's heart. The most precious prayers are those that are initiated by God within us. God knows all the matters that concern us. However, we must ask ourselves if we can say, "Lord, I believe You know all the things concerning me. Although I am

in a difficult situation, You have not initiated anything within me, and I will not pray for this situation." If in our prayer we can tell the Lord that we will not pray for any matter, we have learned a great lesson. At least we should pray, "God, You know that I am bearing a big burden. Do You think I should pray for any matter that concerns me?" We may then bring the matters to Him one by one. If there is an echo within when we touch a certain matter, we have touched God in that matter and can proceed to pray for that matter. But if God's presence is not there, and there is no sense of God when we touch a certain matter, we should drop that matter. Whenever we pray, we should stop immediately when we do not touch God or sense His presence. We should no longer pray for that matter. However, as soon as we touch God, we should continue praying. We should pray for the items that bring us into His presence. No matter how many burdens we have or how many difficulties we face, we should never pray according to these difficulties. Rather, we should pray according to God's initiation and presence. Prayer is fully a matter of man mingling with God. We should never utter a prayer in which we pray, but He does not pray. We cannot enjoy God in such prayers. We must have the confidence to say that He is praying as we pray. We must also have the confidence to say that our prayer follows His prayer and is directed by His prayer. In this way, He bears us in His prayer, and He joins us in His prayer. Every word of our prayer touches Him, and we enjoy Him. (*How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God*, Chapter 12)

Fellowship Questions:

1. How do having set times of prayer afford us extra grace? Do you have examples of receiving this grace, or of having missed this grace?
2. How should we determine what a good time for set prayer is? How can we avoid these set times becoming a legality?
3. What does it mean to *reach* God in our prayer? What prevents us from doing this?
4. Using the example of Abraham's intercession, what does it mean to inquire of God as we begin to consider matters to pray for? What is it like to have an "echo within" related to praying for a matter? What should we do if we pray for something but there is no "echo within"?