

## 22. CALL ON GOD IN YOUR NEED



*At the sound of earnest prayer  
Satan's whole host trembles.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

## CALL ON GOD IN YOUR NEED

*In Jeremiah 33:3 God says: "Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and I will show you great and mighty things, which you did not know."*

A song we all know very well is the song 'Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus'. We often sing the chorus only, but the lyrics start off by saying:

*"O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There is light for a look at the Saviour,  
and life more abundant and free!"*

During COVID-19 many of us have experienced a shaking of our faith. It is a very testing and trying time we are going through. During this time your soul has become weary and troubled and it may seem as if your troubles are piling up and there is no way out. It may seem as if there is no light at the end of the tunnel. When we think of the song, it says that there is a light for a look at the Saviour. In other words, praying we behold God and His marvellous light in times of darkness and during the effects of the darkness we are experiencing all around us. Darkness vanishes in the presence of His light in our lives.

Today I am going to dwell on prayer and calling on God during prayer. Prayer (and communion with God) is the one place where the monsters and their works cannot follow us. Satan and his angels cannot follow us into prayer. The temptations of this world disappear when we pray, so do not neglect to call on the Light when you find yourself in darkness.

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FOLLOW US INTO PRAYER.**

Every evening when the sun sets, my husband and I start turning on the lights of our home. Every day when the forces of evil close in on us, we too should put on the lights. We should call on that Light which illuminates all darkness within our lives. The way we call upon Him, is in prayer. *'At the sound of earnest prayer, Satan's whole host trembles.'* Have you taken time to pray during your emotional darkness?

What exactly does it mean to call on God and to pray? We will consider six aspects of prayer:

Firstly we need to **desperately call on God**. Jeremiah 33:3 says we should call on God in our distress. When I was small we used to bath in the morning before our parents. The habit was that my parents would run a bath for us. I remember one morning when the bath was busy running, I got into the bath and I felt that the water was a bit too cold. I reopened the hot tap. As I opened the hot tap, the washer broke, the tap couldn't close and hot water was splashing all over the bathroom. It was splashing so badly, that even though I got out of the water and stood on the side of the bath, I started to burn. For some reason I couldn't jump out of the bath completely. I was on the inside edge of the bath and I remember shouting to my dad for help. I didn't calmly say: "Dad, please come here." I shouted, I screamed and I did this three or four times because he had to come and help me! I was in trouble, therefore it wasn't a weak call.

I wondered to myself, when we call on God in prayer, do we call on Him weakly? Do we give up easily? Just ask Him once? Or do we call three or four times the way I called my dad? Are we calling upon His name powerfully, sometimes crying and screaming: "Lord help me?"

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The Bible tells us that we should not give up when we pray. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we read: *"We should pray without ceasing."* It does not mean that we need to be on our knees 24/7. To pray without ceasing means that our souls should be in constant connection with God. There is a saying 'prayer is the breath of your soul.' Have you ever been without breath? Have you ever held your breath? Normally we breathe every single moment of our day – that is the type of connection our souls should have with God.

When I was baptized, there was a young man who was baptized along with me. I was a bit naughty and told the pastor when he baptizes this friend of mine, he should hold him under the water a bit longer. Funny enough, the pastor did it. I remember after the baptism, my friend told me he did not know why, but when the pastor baptized him, the pastor held him under water longer. He told me that he struggled to breathe and just wished the pastor would bring him up out of the water. It made me think the way we want breath so badly, the way we would struggle for breath, is how much we should want prayer. We should seek for it with all our heart, 24 hours of the day, every moment of the day.

There are many reasons why we haven't seen the great and mighty things the verse in Jeremiah promises us. One is because we haven't really called on God. Many people will not eat and will lose sleep in order to attend to earthly goals, but what earnest effort are you making to obtain your spiritual goals? Have you become a spiritual dwarf or are you a spiritual giant? Jesus says in the Bible that we should set the bar high. He is our example because He set the bar very high.

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Jesus told His request to His father three times over. He went back and He prayed. He prayed because He was searching, He was in distress and He kept praying. He prayed until the disciples fell asleep. I do not know about you, but I have never prayed to the point of sweating, let alone sweating blood. Jesus prayed earnestly and He set the bar for us on how to call upon God when we are in need.

In Job 23:12 Job says: *"I have cherished thy word more than my necessary food."* The Bible (Word of God) represents the food that you eat daily. Prayer is represented as breath. Which one do you need more, food or breath? You cannot be reading the Bible 24/7, but you can pray throughout the day. Lift your thoughts to God when you have problems. Even if you do not close your eyes, talk to God in your heart and in your mind. This is how you call upon God with earnestness.

Secondly you need to learn to **prioritise** prayer. You often neglect prayer because you do not make it your first priority. You enter into dark valleys in your life and you face the dark valleys alone because you do not prioritise prayer.

There is a story of a powerful preacher, John Wesley, who lived in the 1800s.

*One evening he had an appointment with a man called Lord Byron who was the most powerful man in England at that time. John Wesley had waited months to see Lord Byron and eventually they had dinner together. After dinner and a short chat, John Wesley got up and began to excuse himself, saying that he needed to leave. Lord Byron was very offended and asked him why he was leaving so soon.*

**PRAY AT ANYTIME OF THE DAY!  
EVEN IF YOU DO NOT CLOSE YOUR  
EYES, TALK TO GOD IN YOUR  
HEART AND IN YOUR MIND. THIS  
IS HOW YOU CALL UPON GOD  
WITH EARNESTNESS.**

*"Don't you realise that I am a very important man and many people have begged to spend time with me at my table? Now you are leaving after such a short visit." John Wesley paused for a moment and then he gave a simple reply: "I do not mean to offend you Sir. I feel very honoured for our time together, but I have an appointment with the King of the Universe now, and I dare not be tired or late".*

Where does prayer feature in your day? Is it a so by the way, just in the passing thing, or do you set specific times for prayer? Do you prioritise prayer, do you prioritise spending time with the Light of the world in order to expel the darkness? Do you pray without ceasing?

It was Jesus' habit to retreat at night as well as early in the morning before anybody got up to go and pray in isolated places. He prayed to God the Father and declared: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, I am the first and the last"* (Revelation 1:8).

I believe that in our prayer life, we should also prioritise Jesus in that way. He should be the first to be on your mind in the morning when you wake up and He should be the last one you say goodnight to before you go to bed.

Remember Daniel was willing to be thrown into the lions' den rather than missing his appointment with God. He was willing to die, rather than missing his three times a day prayer he had slotted in for himself. He prioritised prayer. Not only do you have to call on God earnestly, but you need to prioritise prayer. The reason why you do not prioritise prayer is not because you are putting bad things before prayer, it is often the good things in life that are your worst enemy.

**PRIORITISE JESUS IN YOUR PRAYER-  
LIFE BY MAKING HIM THE FIRST TO  
BE ON YOUR MIND IN THE MORNING  
WHEN YOU WAKE UP AND THE LAST  
ONE YOU SAY GOODNIGHT TO BEFORE  
YOU GO TO BED.**

It is not always the bad distractions that take your mind from prayer, but the good things that are important and that you need to spend time on. Be careful that the good things in life do not take the place of the best thing which is Jesus. Do not let the good things take that special time you set aside during the day to pray.

Thirdly you need to **remove distractions**, because these distractions are going to take your mind away from that earnest prayer you need in order to make it through the tough times. Jesus did not pray hurriedly and rumbling off His prayers as we have a tendency to do. We say little rhymes we just pray quickly. "Thank you Lord for the day and the food. Amen." We do not even remember what we prayed after we've prayed. We lose our precious time with God because there are so many distractions on our mind.

This is why it is good to pray early in the morning before the distractions arrive, before the worries of the day and the tasks of the day start crowding your thoughts and your minds. If you need to, go somewhere to be alone where there are no distractions diverting your attention.

My dad told us a story about his youngest brother. When they were young, they used to do family worship together. My grandfather would do the closing prayer. During the prayer, his younger brother would sit with his finger on the button of the remote for the television. The television was a distraction for him. The minute my grandfather said amen, he would switch on the television. What are the things distracting you?

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YOUR MIND.**

One thing we can learn from Islam, is the set times for prayer. They leave work, they leave everything they are busy with, to take time for prayer. They prioritise it, they remove distractions and they go to a quiet place where their minds and their hearts could truly commune with God.

Do you have a special and a quiet place for prayer? This is an important question to ask yourself. A place where there are no people or things that are going to distract you. A place where you can truly open up your heart to the Lord and lay your troubles and sorrows before Him? Sometimes busy mothers close themselves inside the toilet because it is the only place left for them to be alone. Please let us be mindful of our family members when they take time for prayer. Do not distract them. Tell people when you are going to pray so that they know you are going to have your quiet time with God. Make Him your priority and remove those distractions that are taking your mind from Him.

The fourth aspect of prayer is enfolded by the question: **“How do we pray?”** The Bible tells us that we should not be like the Pharisees and Sadducees that stand on the street corners and pray out loud and scream to be seen by man. The Bible says we should go into our closet, shut the door and pray to be seen and heard by God. Jesus left us a beautiful example in the Lord's Prayer on how to pray. I am not going to repeat the Lord's Prayer because you all know it. The Lord's Prayer is there for us, not so that we should repeat it like parrots, because there is no power in doing that. God gave us the example of the Lord's Prayer so that we can realise a true prayer is sincere. The prayer can be short and to the point, simple and genuine, where we open up our hearts to the Lord as we do to a friend.

**TELL PEOPLE WHEN YOU ARE  
GOING TO PRAY SO THAT THEY  
KNOW YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE  
YOUR QUIET TIME WITH GOD.  
MAKE HIM YOUR PRIORITY AND  
REMOVE ALL DISTRACTIONS.**



*There is a story about a tribe that lived in the jungle and used to collect sticks to make a fire. There was a specific species of monkeys that also lived there. The tribe lit a fire every evening and went to sleep with the fire still glowing. The next morning, they would find some of the monkeys sleeping next to the fire embers that the fire left behind. A plague broke out in this village which forced the tribe to leave the village and settle somewhere else. After a few weeks one of the villagers returned to the original camp because they left something behind which they needed. When he arrived at the camp, he found quite a few piles of wood strategically placed throughout the village. He wondered why there were all these piles of wood in the village, until he noticed what was happening. The monkeys were carrying wood to the village in the hope that they could create a fire like the villagers had created. The monkeys were trying to imitate the villagers. They noticed that the villagers piled the wood and then there was a fire. There was wood and there were piles, but there was no fire.*

This is what happens with us when we try to imitate and copy the prayers of others. We copy all the words and all the mannerisms they use by doing repetitions of the same prayer, over and over. Yes, there is a prayer, but there is no fire. There is no authenticity. 2 Timothy 3:5 talks about this: *“They have a form of godliness but they deny the power of true godliness.”*

Carl Bates, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, once made a sobering statement. He said: *“If God were to take the Holy Spirit out of our midst today, about 95% of what we are doing in our churches would go on, and we would not know the difference.”*

**DON'T IMITATE & COPY THE PRAYERS  
OF OTHERS. DON'T TRY AND USE  
THEIR FANCY WORDS OR MANNERISMS  
RATHER PRAY A SIMPLE PRAYER BUT  
LET IT BE YOUR OWN FROM THE  
HEART.**

*Yet, if God had taken the Holy Spirit out of the midst of the first Christian church community, about 95% of what they were doing, would have ceased immediately." We should not just live and copy and imitate religion, we should really and truly have God in our hearts to have that fire to pray a genuine Christian heartfelt prayer. Let us be genuine. Do not imitate prayers. Do not try to be like those big preachers who scream and shout when they pray. Just open your heart to God as you do to a friend and allow the Holy Spirit to come in and speak to your mind.*

Some believe that the power of prayer lies in the length of the prayer. I heard of churches that have all night vigils where people pray throughout the night and I wondered what they pray. I wondered whether they run out of things to say.

I remember one day a church that I used to pastor, had what they called an International Day of Prayer and fasting. Because it was a day of prayer, three elders were in the front of the church. I was sitting in the pews that day, so I was not in the front with them. The three elders started praying and they prayed such long prayers, it seemed as if the one elder just tried to outdo the next. One tried to be more fervent and more earnest and making the prayer much longer. I was kneeling next to the head elder and there was a small child between the two of us. The prayer took so long that the little child fell asleep on his knees and started snoring out loud in the church. This was funny, but you see, we often think that the length of the prayer is what is important.

We need to realise that there is a difference between public, private and family prayer. In a private prayer, we share everything with the Lord.

**DO NOT COPY & IMITATE RELIGION,  
TRULY SEEK GOD IN YOUR HEART  
LET HIM BURN IN YOUR HEART THEN  
ALL YOUR PRAYERS WILL BE  
GENUINE & HEARTFELT.**

We open up our hearts to Him. With a family prayer we can also share quite a bit, but not everything, not our private thoughts. In a public prayer, only that which is necessary should be shared. In other words, our private prayers can be a little longer, our family prayers a bit shorter and the public prayers should be the shortest.

The power of prayer does not lie in the length of the prayer. Aspect number five on prayer is the fact that the power of prayer does not lie in the **feeling** you have when you pray either but in **the promises of God** and in the claiming of those promises of God. Many of you might ask questions like: "What if I don't feel my prayers? What if they are not powerful? What if they are not strong? Will God still answer them?" Do not listen to the voice of Satan telling you that you need to feel something. The Bible tells us: *"It is written that men ought to always pray and not to faint. We should pray until we do have the burdens of our wants upon our souls, and if we persevere, we shall have it."* Remember that you may not always feel like praying, but that is when you need to pray the most. You should yield in faith to God's promises and not your feelings.

I am reminded of the day when Jesus was on the cross and He felt abandoned by His Father. He asked: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But He still prayed. He was still talking to His Father despite His feelings of God not hearing His prayers, or Him not feeling in the mood for prayer.

**REMEMBER THAT YOU MAY NOT ALWAYS FEEL LIKE PRAYING, BUT THAT IS WHEN YOU NEED TO PRAY THE MOST. YOU SHOULD YIELD IN FAITH TO GOD'S PROMISES AND NOT YOUR FEELINGS.**

The power of prayer lies in the lifting up of the soul to God to the point where our thoughts and minds are elevated to heavenly things and the troubles of this world start to fade away ... when we lift our eyes to the Way-maker and we claim His promises in prayer and faith. Like the song says – we should turn our eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and then the things of this earth will start to grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

The last point of prayer to consider is that we can **take everything to God**, whether big or small, our worst trials and the smallest things that are bothering and worrying us. Many times in my life, I did not ask people for help in the small matters because I did not want to bother them with the small, insignificant things I could sort out myself. I realise that we do the same with God. We sometimes go to the Lord but we think we will not tell Him this specific thing because it is too small and insignificant, we can sort it out on our own. We don't bring it to the Lord and we suffer on our own, trying to sort through the apparent 'small things' of life.

On the other hand, we sometimes neglect prayer because we feel that some of the things are too big for God. A kind of Goliath that is too strong for Him. Perhaps we think we cannot ask that much of God, it is too much, we must scale down our requests to a more manageable size. This reminds me of a story that I once heard of Alexander the Great. I do not know whether it is a true story, but I enjoyed the lesson that could be learnt from it.

I am sure everyone knows the history of Alexander the Great and what a mighty king and a fierce conqueror he was.

**DON'T NEGLECT PRAYER BECAUSE YOU FEEL YOUR REQUEST IS TOO BIG FOR GOD. DON'T BE SCARED TO ASK MUCH OF GOD, IT IS NOT TOO MUCH FOR HIM. DON'T SCALE DOWN YOUR REQUESTS TO A MORE MANAGEABLE SIZES.**

He lived during 300 B.C. and his reputation today is still that of the conqueror of the then entire known world. When he had nothing left to conquer after Asia, it is said, he actually wept.

*Besides being a great conqueror, Alexander was also very compassionate with people. Every year he would set aside a day which was called the 'Day of Compassion'. Apparently he would randomly select people across his kingdom who then would come and ask the king a special request. The king would grant them whatever they want. How amazing!*

*However, most of the people that came before him was kind of timid and scared and did not want to bother him, so they would only ask for food and clothes and money and medicine and small mundane things.*

*One year there was a person that came with a special request. He first spoke to the king's spokesperson. "Could you please tell the king that I would like to have a large palace? I want it to have a large banquet hall and a big meal must be served to all my friends and my family." The spokesperson obviously became very irritated and said the request was too big. "Most people only ask for food and medicine. How dare you ask for a large palace? This is very arrogant of you!"*

*King Alexander was sitting on his throne and he noticed the commotion of the spokesperson and the man. He asked the spokesperson what it was about. The spokesperson went to the king and he whispered in his ear because he didn't want to speak about this arrogant request in front of everybody.*

**WHEN YOU PRAY TO GOD YOU  
DON'T NEED TO BE TIMID OR  
SCARED YOU ARE NOT BOTHERING  
HIM EVER. HE IS THE GOD OF  
THE UNIVERSE LET YOUR REQUESTS  
ACKNOWLEDGE THIS FACT.**

*He said to the king: "This man is being unreasonable and irrational. He is asking for a palace. He says he has many friends and he wants a big palace with a big banquet hall and a meal for all his friends and family. I am so sorry, he insisted, even though I told him it was unreasonable."*

*It is said that King Alexander paused for a moment and then, all of a sudden with a big smile he turned towards the guy that asked for the palace and he said: "Your request is granted."*

*The spokesperson was obviously shocked because this was an outrageously large request, but the king smiled and said: "All the people have been asking for food and medicine and mundane things that anyone could have given them. They thought all I could give them were small things. But they don't need a king to give them those things, anyone can give them extra food or medicine. For the first time a man has made me feel like a real king, because he asked me something that one could only request from a king, and therefore I am granting his request."*

I thought to myself; is this not the same with God? God is not King Alexander. He is the King of the Universe! He cares about the small and the great and the impossibilities of life. In your life right now, in the darkness of the COVID-19 pandemic, you might have a huge request you want to bring before the Lord and you might feel that it is impossible. Do not make God feel like an everyday person. Make Him feel like the King of the Universe!

In Jeremiah 33:3 the Bible tells us: "Call on Me, and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things, which you did not know."

**DO NOT MAKE GOD FEEL LIKE AN  
EVERYDAY PERSON. MAKE HIM  
FEEL LIKE THE KING OF THE  
UNIVERSE! SHOW BY YOUR PRAYER  
YOU KNOW WHO HE IS.**

Ephesians 3:20 says: *“Now unto Him that is able to do **exceedingly abundantly above all** that we can think or imagine, according to His power that works in us.”*

The problem with us is that we claim little when we may claim so much, for there is no limit to the promises of God. God is at your disposal. God is there to answer your prayers. Go to Him, call on the Light in your darkness. Prioritise God and pray without ceasing, remove all distractions around you. Believe God's promises. Do not trust your feelings. Pray from your heart. Open up your heart to God whether long or short. Lay your requests, whether big or small, before the God of the Universe, and see the great and mighty things God has in store for you today.

**GOD IS THERE TO ANSWER YOUR PRAYERS. GO TO HIM, CALL ON THE LIGHT IN YOUR DARKNESS. PRIORITISE GOD AND PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, REMOVE ALL DISTRACTIONS AROUND YOU AND LAY YOUR SOUL BARE BEFORE HIM.**

# Podcast



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