“The reason why many fail in battle is because they wait until the hour of battle. The reason why others succeed is because they have gained their victory on their knees long before the battle came... Anticipate your battles; fight them on your knees before temptation comes, and you will always have victory.”

R. A. Torrey

Kirk’s Comment  I admit that I don’t pray as much as I should. Prayer is the power behind everything we do. No prayer, no power. With prayer, God does miracles.

Questions & Objections

“Did Simon Peter find out that Jesus was the Christ by a revelation from heaven (Matthew 16:17), or by his brother Andrew (John 1:41)?”

The emphasis of Matthew 16:17 is that Simon did not just hear it from someone else—God had made it clear to him. That does not preclude him being told by other people. Jesus’ point is that Peter was not simply repeating what someone else had said. He had lived and worked with Jesus and he was now clear in his mind that Jesus was none other than the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the Living God. Jesus did not ask, “Who have you heard that I am?” but, “Who do you say I am?” There is all the
difference in the world between these two questions, and Peter was no longer in any doubt.

Ephesians chapter 6 tells us that a great weapon of the soldier of Christ is prayer. It is the line of communication we have with Headquarters. It is by that line that we request supplies for the troops—ammunition, food, medical aid, etc. This is why it is essential to keep the communication line open, free from interference and from Satanic static. Sin interferes with earth-to-heaven communication.

For the soldier of Christ, true prayer should be a way of life, not just a call for help in the heat of battle. This is made very clear in Scripture:

- Ephesians 6:18: “Praying always…”
- Colossians 4:2: “Continue in prayer…”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”

God loves His children coming to Him in the intimate communion of prayer. The Scriptures tell us, “The prayer of the upright is his delight” (Proverbs 15:8). Since prayer is our lifeline to God, to not pray is an insult to Him. Ben Jennings wrote, “Every prayerless day is a statement by a helpless individual, ‘I do not need God today.’ Failing to pray reflects idolatry—a trust in substitutes for God. We rely on our money instead of God’s provision. We rest on our own flawed thinking rather than on God’s perfect wisdom. We take charge of our lives rather than trusting God. Prayerlessness short-circuits the working of God. Neglecting prayer, therefore, is not a weakness; it is a sinful choice.”

Hardly a day goes by when I don’t beseech God for wisdom. I need the wisdom of God. The Scriptures say, “He that gets wisdom loves his own soul” (Proverbs 19:8). If you have wisdom from above, you will seek to save souls. If you have wisdom, you will see the traps set by the enemy, you will encourage other Christians with insights from the Word, and you will cut sinners to the heart with the wisdom of God.
It has been said that he who is a stranger to prayer will also be a stranger to God’s power. The great missionary Hudson Taylor said, “The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see mighty works of Divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God’s standing challenge, ‘Call to me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know’” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Let us never face a day in battle until we have faced the Father in prayer. John Bunyan stated, “Prayer is a shield to the soul, a delight to God, and a scourge to Satan.” Someone once said that Satan trembles when he sees the feeblest Christian on his knees. How utterly convicting are the words of Martin Luther: “I have so much to do [today] that I should spend the first three hours in prayer.” Luther was a monk, and therefore had the time to spend in prayer, but we can see the principle of what he was saying: Seek first the kingdom of God.

A man was once cutting a tree stump with an obviously blunt axe. He was only bruising the bark as sweat poured from his beaded brow. Someone suggested that he stop for a moment and sharpen the axe, to which he replied, “I’m too busy chopping the tree to stop for anything.” If he would only stop for a moment and sharpen the axe, he would be able to slice through the tree with far greater ease.

Stop at the beginning of each day to “sharpen the axe” through prayer. Seek first the kingdom of God and you will slice through that day with far greater ease.

**How to Pray**

God always answers prayer. Sometimes He says yes; sometimes He says no; and sometimes He says, “Wait for a minute.” And since to the Lord a thousand years is the same as a day (2 Peter 3:8), that could mean a ten-year wait for us. So ask in faith, but rest in peace-filled patience.

Surveys show that more than 90 percent of Americans pray daily. No doubt they pray for health, wealth, happiness, etc. They also pray when grandma gets sick, and when grandma doesn’t get better (or dies), many end up disillusioned or bitter. This is because they don’t understand what the Bible says about prayer. It teaches, among other things, that our sin
will keep God from even hearing our prayer (Psalm 66:18), and that if we pray with doubt, we will not get an answer (James 1:6, 7).

Here’s how to be heard:

- Pray with faith (Hebrews 11:6).
- Pray with clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3, 4).
- Pray genuine heartfelt prayers, rather than vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7).
- Make sure that you are praying to the God revealed in the Scriptures (Exodus 20:3–6).

1. How do you “pray with faith”? Someone once told me, “Ray, you’re a man of great faith in God,” thinking they were paying me a compliment. They weren’t. What if I said to you, “I’m a man of great faith in my doctor”? It’s a compliment to the doctor. If I have great faith in him, it means that I see him as being a man of integrity, a man of great ability—that he is trustworthy. I give “glory” to the man through my faith in him. The Bible says that Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Romans 4:20, 21). Abraham was a man of great faith in God. Remember, that is not a compliment to Abraham. He merely caught a glimpse of God’s incredible ability, His impeccable integrity, and His wonderful faithfulness to keep every promise He makes. Abraham’s faith gave “glory” to a faithful God.

As far as God is concerned, if you belong to Jesus, you are a VIP. You can boldly come before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). You have access to the King because you are the son or daughter of the King. When you were a child, did you have to grovel to get your needs met by your parents? I hope not.

So when you pray, don’t say, “Oh God, I hope you will supply my needs.” Instead, say something like, “Father, thank You that You keep every promise You make. Your Word says that You will supply all my needs according to Your riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Therefore, I thank You that You will do this thing for my family. I ask this in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.”
2. How do you get “clean hands and a pure heart”? Simply by confessing your sins to God through Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7–9). God will not only forgive your every sin, He promises to forget them (Hebrews 8:12). Based on the sacrifice of the Savior, He will justify you—just as if you had never sinned. He will make you pure in His sight—sinless. He will even “purge” your conscience, so that you will no longer have a sense of guilt that you sinned. That’s what it means to be “justified by faith.” That’s why you need to soak yourself in Holy Scripture; read the letters to the churches and see the wonderful things God has done for us through the cross of Calvary. If you don’t bother to read the “will,” you won’t have any idea what has been given to you.

3. How do you pray “genuine heartfelt prayers”? Simply by keeping yourself in the love of God. If the love of God is in you, you will never pray hypocritical or selfish prayers. Just talk to your heavenly Father as candidly and intimately as a young child, nestled on Daddy’s lap, would talk to his earthly father. How would you feel if every day your child pulled out a pre-written statement to dryly recite to you, rather than pouring out the events and emotions of that day? God wants to hear from your heart. When your prayer-life is pleasing to God, He will reward you openly (Matthew 6:6).

4. How do you know you’re praying to “the God revealed in Scripture”? Study the Word. Don’t accept the image of God portrayed by the world, even though it appeals to the natural mind. A kind, gentle Santa Claus figure, dispensing good things with no sense of justice or truth, appeals to guilty sinners. Look to the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai. Gaze at Jesus on the cross of Calvary—hanging in unspeakable agony because of the justice of a holy God. Such thoughts tend to banish idolatry.

To inspire you to daily go before the throne of grace, let this description of transforming prayer, by Alvin J. Vander Griend, encourage you:

Prayer can move mountains. It can change human hearts, families, neighborhoods, cities, and nations. It’s the ultimate source of power because it is, in reality, the power of Almighty God.

Prayer can do what political action cannot, what education cannot, what military might cannot, and what planning committees cannot. All these are impotent by comparison.
By prayer the kingdom of God is built, and by prayer the kingdom of Satan is destroyed. Where there is no prayer, there are no great works, and there is no building of the kingdom. Where there is much prayer and fervent prayer, there are great gains for the kingdom: God’s rule is established, His power is directed, His will is done, society is transformed, lost persons are saved, and saints are enabled to “stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11). If that isn’t enough to compel us to “devote [ourselves] to prayer” and “always [wrestle] in prayer” (Col. 4:2,12), I don’t know what is!

**Questions**

1. **Why do we need to pray?**

2. **What does the Bible say about how often we should pray?**

3. **According to Ben Jennings, what does prayerlessness reflect?**

4. **How does God feel about our prayers?**
5. How can we make sure our prayers are heard?

6. How much time do you spend in prayer each day?

**Feathers for Arrows**

In Leviticus 26:1–13, God promises Israel many wonderful blessings if they would simply obey Him: the rain would come in due season; the land would yield its harvest and the trees would yield their fruit; their food would satisfy them; they would have peace and safety in the land (no violence); and they would prevail over their enemies. Truly, blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.

Daniel Webster said, “If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

**Memory Verse**

“This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us.”

1 John 5:14

**Last Words**

Ignatius, in the arena, before the lions had reached him, said:

“I am the wheat of Christ; I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread.”