

# [ARM Prison Outreach International](#)

## "Ministers' Minute" Volume XI Number 4

### "Essential Equipment - #3: Prayer"

Jeff Strite

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Editor's Note: This "MM" is an email sermon, the 4th of 2012 --124th overall-- in a series we are sending as an encouragement to Christians around the world. This is the third message in our current series. The other two are archived at our ["Ministers' Minutes"](#) page. [Click Here](#)

It is my prayer that this message by Jeff Strite will encourage you and honor God. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, use it or components of it! May God bless your labors!

-- Rod Farthing, Development Director

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### [ARM QUICK FACTS:](#)

American Bible Academy Update

#### [Jan-Feb 2012 Summary](#)

**1,957** courses were sent to NEW ENROLLEES!

**3,226** courses were sent to UPPER CLASSMEN!

**5,183** total courses were sent to prisoners!

[COURSES MAILED IN 2011: 27,274](#)

[An average of 75 courses sent DAILY! New enrollees: 31 per day!](#)

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### ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT - PRAYER

TEXT: 1 Timothy 2:1-2:8

OPEN: A young boy was observed by a minister in church praying very fervently; but much to the preacher's surprise, he was also heard to say from time to time: "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo." So preacher approached the boy after he had apparently finished his prayer and said, "Son, I was very pleased to see you praying so devoutly, but tell me, why did you keep saying 'Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo?'"

The boy replied, "Well, you see sir, I just finished taking my geography test in school, and I have been praying for the Lord to make Tokyo the Capital of France."

**APPLICATION:** Many people pray, wanting God to better their lives, change their circumstances. Even non-religious people will turn to prayer in times of need to appeal to a higher power for Him to intervene and change their lives.

An article on prayer in America in Newsweek (1/6/92) quoted sociologist Andrew M. Greeley as saying that more than 3/4 (78 %) of all Americans prayed at least once a week. More than 1/2 (57%) reported praying at least once a day. Indeed, Greeley found that nearly 1 in 5 of Americans who are atheists or agnostics, still prayed daily. The #1 reason people pray is to ask God to intervene in their lives.

### **AND IT WORKS:**

The most intriguing experiment involves 60 patients at the Arthritis Treatment Center in Clearwater, Fla. Because rheumatoid arthritis has clear manifestations - including swollen joints and crippling pain - relief of these symptoms can be easily measured. The study is under the general direction of Dr. Dale Matthews, an associate of medicine at the Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, DC. Matthews is also a Presbyterian who has been praying for and with patients for years and now wants to find out if science can confirm that prayer really has healing effects.

He has divided the participants into 2 general groups. All patients will receive 4 days of healing prayer through the traditional Christian practice of laying on of hands by the Christian Healing Ministry. In addition, half the patients will receive 6 months of long distance intercessory prayer. Both groups will be examined by the same clinician before the experiment, immediately afterward and again at one, 3, 6 and 12 months. Throughout, Matthews is using strict scientific protocols and standards set by the American College of Rheumatology. By the end of this year, after an outside physician has scrutinized the data, Matthews and his team hope to show what difference, if any, prayer has made.

Already, a videotape of the early phase of the study shows that some individual patients have experienced extraordinary short term results from prayer. "There's something weird going on here, and I love it," says one patient. At the beginning of the experiment, he had 49 tender joints. After 4 sessions with a hands on praying minister, he had only 8. Six months later, he says he has no pain at all and no need of medication. (Newsweek, March 31, 1997 p. 62)

**BUT** (in a way) prayer doesn't work. At the first church I served, a sporadic attender was suffering from a life threatening disease & asked for the elders to come and lay hands on him. He was healed... and he NEVER CAME BACK TO CHURCH after that.

At the last congregation I served a young girl was living with her boyfriend and bore a baby that (for a while) looked like it would die. There were many prayers, laying of hands - and the child was miraculously healed... But the family NEVER CAME TO CHURCH. Prayer changed their circumstances... but it didn't change them.

Prayer is an awesome tool. It allows us to unleash the might power of God AND brings healing for the sick, a mending of relationships, a change in our circumstances. GOD MAY NOT always answer our prayers WHEN we'd like, in THE WAY we'd like. BUT God does answer prayer.

However, if prayer ONLY changes our circumstances, and it doesn't change us, IT ACCOMPLISHES LITTLE OF LASTING VALUE,

BUT PRAYER – when you pray the way ought to pray – WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE. So, how do I pray in such a way as to change me???

**FIRST:** I Timothy 2:1 gives us these words: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone"

"First of all?" Why first of all? BECAUSE, our tendency is to say: "I can't do anything else about this, so... (I'll pray). You know what that should tell us??? When we pray that way (as a last resort) we are saying we are still in control of our lives. God is an afterthought. Thus prayer doesn't come "first of all" for many of us. It comes last, if at all.

That type of thinking is what's reflected but the saying: "God helps those who help themselves." Many people believe that's a direct quote out of Scripture (BUT IT'S NOT). In fact, the Bible's stories defy that kind of theology. If "God helps those who help themselves" then Samson shouldn't have been a failure. Saul would have been the greatest king of the Old Testament, and Jezebel would have been a role model for all women. But God DOESN'T help those who help themselves. God helps those who look to Him in obedience and prayer.

One person once said: "Winners devote everything to prayer... Losers use prayer as a last resort."

**SECOND:** How do I pray in such a way as to change me?

I Timothy 2:8 says: "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer..."

ILLUS: A 24 yr. old Prostitute I read about was quoted as saying: "I don't talk about my feelings a lot. Instead I lie on my bed and think unto Him. I meditate because sometimes my words don't come out right. But He can find me. He can find what's

inside me just by listening to my thoughts. I ask Him to help me and keep me going. A lot of people this working girls don't have any morals, any religion. But I do. I don't steal. I don't lie. The way I look at it, I'm not sinning. He's not going to judge me. I don't think God judges anybody."

Correct me if I'm wrong (though I'm not). Does it seem she's missed something here? It's fairly obvious, this woman is NOT lifting holy hands to God. But we'd never live a life like hers so we shouldn't have any problems lifting up "holy hands"... should we? Well, we might.

If you take a closer look at vs. 8, you'll find that Paul defines what he means by what makes for "holy hands" in prayer: "without anger or disputing." In other words, it is anger and disputing that can make our hands unclean in prayer.

When Jesus talked about the one thing that would cause God not to forgive us, He didn't say it was prostitution or murder - it was an unforgiving heart in our lives. "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:15).

If we want to have prayer change us, we need to lift up holy hands, hands unstained by a hardened attitude and anger.

**THIRD** Lastly, I Timothy 2:1-4 says: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Why are we to pray for authorities, etc. (verse 3)? Why? Because, if I'm going to pray a life changing kind of prayer I need to ask myself: why should God answer my prayer?

Life changing prayer doesn't ask "what is my will? BUT RATHER – it prays like Jesus did: "Not my will, but thy will be done."

When a people pray that way – they take themselves off center stage

What type of prayer pleases God? vs. 2, 3 tell us: "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

CLOSE: Murphy Belding, small group minister at SE Christian Church had visited a large congregation in Korea some time back. It had 650,000 members – 64,000 per service. They also had a place they called "prayer mountain" where up to 22,000 people could pray. There were slots cut into the mountain side where people could go and kneel and pray. Because of

the nature of their culture, when they prayed they literally shouted to God, interceding for their church, their nation, their family, etc.

Murphy, and few American Christians boarded the bus for the mountain and were typical Christians from the US – talking, laughing, joking. But as the Korean Christians came on board, they quietly took their seats and folded their hands, praying to God quietly in soft sing song voices.

More and more Koreans boarded the bus and more and more of them folded their hands and prayed. For the whole one hour bus ride to the mountain, the Koreans prayed on in this way, while initially, the Americans continued in their boisterous talk. But eventually, the prayers of the Koreans began to change the new comers, until – at last – even they quieted down into their prayers on the ride as well.

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**Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B**  
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**In 2010, 71 ABA Bible courses were mailed from ARM every day!**