

*Part 5*

*Faith Alive Through--*

**PRAYING ALWAYS**

**CONTENTS**

God Finds A Lost Hammer

This Is To Pray:

Over Trail Ridge Road By Prayer

Two Sunday Bulletins Tell A Story

Checking-up On The Acts of Acts

Cashing God's Checks

Always Means Always!

Score: Men "0", God "100"

A Walking Prayer List?

Steve Stacy's Letter

Prayer On A Very Dark Night

The Unanswered Question

The Key To The Vaults

God taught me to pray when I was twelve years old. The setting for this lesson of life was the cold Winter of 1944.

In March of this year I had accepted Jesus during a Revival at our Union Chapel church. I had listened to others pray but it was something the preacher did at funerals and in the church building.

The prayer lesson was centered around a desperate need to find a hammer. My brother and I ran a trap line every winter to make spending money. We trapped and hunted with dogs the wild animals common to Mule Creek and the Gyp Hills of Barber County--skunks, possums, coyotes and muskrats. These we skinned, stretched their hides and in due time shipped off to Chicago for a check in return. I looked after the trap line while Oren attended High School in Medicine Lodge during the week. On this particular winter day I borrowed my Mother's hammer to drive the stakes in the ground or a nail in a tree that secured the chain to hold the trap. Please understand that there was an unwritten law in our house--NOBODY EVER TAKES MAMA'S HAMMER. I wanted this hammer as it had a handle made of hard wood which would not stick to your hands in the sub zero temperature.

When I returned to the house, Mother met me at the door with these words--"Wilbur, my hammer is missing. I am sure you took it". With chattering teeth from the extreme cold I replied, "I don't have it." I had not missed it until that moment and my reply was a true statement for I had lost it out on the trail. Mother admonished, "You go right back out there and get it and don't come home without it."

Back through falling snow and cold wind I tramped across the stubble of the wheat field and down the trail of traps. Results? No hammer. With numb toes, red ears and some tears I searched the same ground again, more carefully this time. NO HAMMER!

Finally, out of a sense of sheer desperation and not religiosity, I knelt down in the high weeds along an old barbed wire fence around the wheat field. I prayed a terribly simple

prayer--"GOD, PLEASE HELP ME FIND THAT HAMMER!"

So sudden was the answer that came into my mind, that I doubted it. The answer that came was this thought--Look on the other side of the creek.

I started to lean on my own understanding again, which up to this point had produced no hammer and near frozen toes, ears and fingers. I answered the answer by reasoning--There is no use in crossing the creek. We haven't had any traps over there this winter. So, I trudged back down the trail fighting the knowing inner thought--Look on the other side of the creek. Results? NO HAMMER!

The winter storm was increasing and I had not found the hammer that stood between me and the warm wood stove back at the house. Stubbornly I answered the knowing thought--Look on the other side of the creek--by marching down across the sandy creek bed, climbing the opposite bank and walking a dozen steps. There in the middle of the foot trail was a beautiful sight--THE HAMMER!

How did the hammer get there? Probably some possum or coon that likes to get their teeth into wood dragged it across the creek.

It was in that instant that I knew GOD HAD ANSWERED MY PRAYER! Joy so warmed me that I ran all the way home and was warm when I got there.

Could I define prayer? NO! Did I know a lot about prayer? NO! But, this did not keep me from using this blessed permission God has granted His people to speak with Him with the assurance that He hears!

I have read books about prayer, studied men of prayer, and contemplated the Scriptures. These have produced the largest folder in my files out of many hundreds of subjects, a four inch thick folder on PRAYER. Yet, by far the greatest blessing to me has been my walking and talking with the Master Teacher, Jesus in prayer. Since we learn most about PRAYING by praying, let us pray.

*Jesus I come boldly to our Father's Throne in Your Name. As of old when men sought You in the market place, the mountain-side, the wedding feast--You were there. Be with me right now and hear my request--Teach me to pray better and more. I want to know You on a First Name basis and talk together like friends. Help me to be willing to attempt the impossible of praying always about all things as You taught us to do. In Your Name, A-men!*

Jesus spoke a parable that tells us much about prayer.

LUKE 18:1-8--"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying: There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying 'Avenge me of my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterwards he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said. 'And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?' I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"(1)

Jesus tells us four things about prayer in this parable.

1. Men ought to always pray.
2. Men ought to always pray.
3. Men ought to always pray.
4. Men ought to always pray and not to lose heart,
5. Will he find faith on the earth?

## **I - What is Prayer?**

A definition?

As I suggested previously when we thought about the Holy Spirit and our spirit, many matters of the spirit defy defining. Yet, this does not remove them from reality. To the contrary, reality, whether it be truth, love, spirit, prayer, etc., is often beyond our understanding as Thomas A. Edison wrote:

We don't know the millionth part of one percent about anything. We don't know what water is. We don't know what light is. We don't know what gravitation is. We don't know what enables us to keep on our feet when we stand up. We don't know what electricity is. We don't know what heat is. We don't know

anything about magnetism. We have a lot of hypotheses about these things, but that is all. But we do not let our ignorance about these things deprive us of their use.(2)

So it is with prayer. Jesus never defined prayer. He simply prayed. When His disciples came asking, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."(3) He did not give a lecture, write a book or send them to the Temple. He taught them to pray by praying. This was the occasion when he spoke what we have come to call the Lord's Prayer.

As a matter of theology, philosophy, and religion, men have written volumes about prayer. From these we glean insight both into the author and the subject of prayer. I call attention to three of these that have blessed me much.

Prayer is conversation with God.

Clement of Alexandria(4)

Prayer is the chief agency and activity whereby men align themselves with God's purpose. Prayer does not consist in battering down the walls of heaven for personal benefit or the success of our plans. Rather it is the committing of ourselves for carrying out of His purposes. It is a telephone call to headquarters for orders. It is not bending God's will to ours, but our will to God's. In prayer, we tap vast reservoirs of spiritual power whereby God can find fuller entrance into the hearts of men.(5)

G. Ashton Oldham

Prayer is not only "the practice of the presence of God," it is the realization of His presence.(6)

Joseph Fort Newton

What is prayer? men ask. God gives no answer except as we glean insight out of the words, phrases and practices in the Bible. The late Dean E. Walker writes:

Start with creation. No systematized doctrine of prayer is recorded. Instead, unconditioned man, created in God's image, is presented as living in free, natural, normal companionship with the Father. Part of this life is expressed in words--sentences--language.

Speech is integral to man. God spoke. Man replied. Each understood. God gave man stewardship of earth. Man accepted the trust. They talked about it.

This privilege was shared by no other creature. It was an aspect of life of the "God who is" as recorded in divine delibera-

tion, "Let us make man in our image." Prayer is both the evidence of, and the realization of, the privilege of the family created by the Word.

Man could choose, He was instructed about choice. He could live in his freedom of prayer with God. He could eat to know evil and die. He died. Separated from his garden and his God, he lived with deafened ear the dreary existence of death.

He struggled with the soil. He fell to savage beasts. He fought other men. He built cities. He herded animals. He fabricated tools from metal. He fashioned instruments and played music. He suffered in the grip of the earth he was intended to subdue and rule. He built altars. On occasion he heard the word of God (Genesis 4:6,7,9-15). He lamented his choice of evil (Genesis 4:23,24). But not until the day of Enos did men begin "to call upon the name of the Lord." And not until the prophet Abraham is it recorded that one who spoke for God included in this word an example and commendation of prayer (compare Genesis 20:7).(7)

Our greatest blessing from PRAYER will come from accepting prayer as conversation with our Maker and doing what the word implies--PRAYING!

**Men ought to always pray.**

**Because God Specializes in the Impossible!**

The setting of Jesus' Parable is an impossible situation. In a Jewish context, a woman might(?) approach a Judge; however, notice how Jesus arranges the story.

"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying: There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying 'Avenge me of my adversary.' "(8)

Note that the judge neither reverences God or man. He has all the qualifications of a Gentile and in that type of society women had no rights. Being a widow underscores the woman being looked down upon by a non-Jewish judge. It is an impossible approach! Yet, the woman received her request because she persisted!

Yes, our God is a GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE! Jesus spoke to this point as recorded in Luke 18:27--"*And He said, 'The*

*things which are impossible with men are possible with God.' ''*

My good friend, Bro. Jim Tillery of Wichita, Kansas wrote an article with this title--**"IMPOSSIBLE=HIM POSSIBLE."**

Confronted with impossible problems in life, we are invited to take them to God in prayer. There is an old camp chorus that speaks this great truth.

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains  
you can't tunnel thru? God specializes in things tho't impossible  
He does the things others cannot do.(9)

One of several hundred times I have seen God work His marvels happened as we headed west up Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain Park near Estes Park, Colorado. It was a steep climb pulling our twenty-six foot travel trailer up and over the Continental Divide. About a quarter of a mile from the pass, the big 454 engine on our Suburban died. I used my own understanding to check distributor spark, gas flow and heat of the engine. All were functioning properly. Traffic was stacking up behind us on the steep mountain road. A Park Ranger arrived to direct traffic around us. The carburetor wasn't flooding. No vapor lock of the engine. No over-heating; but, the engine refused to start. The Ranger indicated he would call a wrecker to tow us down the mountain to a garage. We paused to pray in Jesus' Name that He would send Angels to start the engine. I turned the ignition key in faith and the engine started with a roar! We were back on the road and over the mountain rejoicing all the way!

We ought always to pray because God does the impossible!

The woman in this parable made her own invitation to speak to the judge because of her need. She continued to seek out the judge until she received help. Jesus said--**"And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him....?"**(10)

When we consider that it is the GREAT ALMIGHTY EVERLASTING GOD OF THE UNIVERSE bidding us to PRAY, how can we do less?

Yet, the reality of what happens all too often in our hearts,

homes and churches is told in this story.

One of our deacons, Morris Kennedy, handed me two Sunday bulletins as we shook hands one Sunday morning “What are these?” I inquired. “That’s the story, preacher. Read it and weep!” The bulletins were current ones from our last two services at the Minneola (Kansas) Christian Church. On them he had recorded from his stop watch the elapsed time of each part of the service. When I added up the score, it was embarrassing. In the order of greatest to least amounts of time spent doing each part of the service, the score was:

- #1--MUSIC (all hymns, special music, etc.)
- #2--PREACHING
- #3--COMMUNION/OFFERING
- #4--ANNOUNCEMENTS
- #5--PRAYER (Including the invocation, benediction, pastoral prayer, communion prayer, offering prayer and moments of silent prayer.)

With this, I started a study-search of the book of Acts to see WHAT God’s People did most. I placed the activities into 12 categories. Shocking results came out like this. The numbers here signify the number of times the activity is named in the book of Acts.

# 1--PRAYER (Fasting).....	29
# 2--PREACHING.....	22
# 3--SALVATION (Jesus Accepted).....	17
# 4--MIRACULOUS GIFTS .....	15
# 5--God's People MET together .....	14
# 6--TEACHING of the Word .....	13
# 7--TESTIMONIES .....	10
# 8--ELECTION SELECTION .....	4
# 9--COMMUNION .....	4
#10--FELLOWSHIP .....	1
#11--PERSECUTION.....	1
#12--SINGING (in jail) .....	1
#13--ANNOUNCEMENTS.....	0

In short order we changed matters so more time was spent praying than making announcements. As time went by, our praying time increased and came very close to the TOP of the list.



This is almost a commentary on my life for the first twenty-five years. I spent much time doing "church busy work"--campaigns, drinking social coffee, promoting, eating lots of banquet meals, heavy publicity with promotion and prizes.

Let us be further reminded of Jesus' urging:

**"It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' " (Matthew 21:13)**




Men ought to always pray.

Because Prayer is a blank check.

LUKE 18:1--*"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart."*

Jesus says--**"I tell you He will avenge them speedily."** Vs.8.

The widow woman knew that she needed help and she knew only one person that could help her--the judge. This judge was so-to-speak a blank check of possibility and from that source she continued to seek until help came.

PLANET EARTH, _____ 19____ No. 2	
<b>BANK OF HEAVEN</b>	
TO THE ORDER OF _____	\$ _____ JOHN 14:13
<u>Whatsoever</u> _____ DOLLARS	
FOR _____	   God – Jesus – Holy Spirit

Notice in the facsimile of the above check that it is to be drawn on the greatest bank -- THE BANK OF HEAVEN. Let us choose the present tense for a date because God is listening now! The check bears the signature of God's family--**GOD, JESUS, THE HOLY SPIRIT**. It is not easy to choose signature symbols for God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. However, when Moses needed to identify God to the children of Israel, the credential that God gave him was this phrase--**"And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' "** (Exodus 3:14) (11) So, I choose the same words. For Jesus I choose the universal symbol of His finished work--the cross. And, the dove for the Holy Spirit. The amount of the check is one of God's promises. There are many hundreds of promises in the Bible which can be claimed-cashed like a check. A promise must be taken in context of meaning. Examples of such promises that I use continually are:

PHILIPPIANS 4:19--"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

ISAIAH 40:31--"But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint."

PSALM 23:1,4--"The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death;  
I will fear no evil;"

PSALM 27:1--"The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life;  
Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Notice carefully that this check **LACKS ONE THING**. Since you cannot see the opposite side, I will tell you what it is. It lacks an endorsement. The check is good because God's Promises are genuine! However, any check that is properly drawn up for any amount to us, is not cash in our hand or bank account UNTIL it is endorsed. Just so with God's Promises. We endorse God's promise-checks through obedience

and prayer. I often pray in the terminology of checks--Lord I'm cashing your check-promise of Phillipians 4:19. Thank you for the promise and now the reality that my needs are supplied.

One of the multiplied times that Imalee and I have cashed the promise-check of Phillipians 4:19 occurred on Labor Day week-end of 1976. We left a located ministry of 14 years in June moving as the Lord directed from Minneola to Arkansas City, Kansas. We had no promised support at that time, and still do not have beyond God's Promise of Matthew 6:33--*"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added to you."* August ended with all needs met and a balance of \$19.73 and \$175 in rent due in five days. Most of our gifts come by mail and over a holiday this all but grinds to a halt. Rent was due on the 6th. No gifts came. On Saturday night in our Family Altar time we cashed God's promise-check of Phillipians 4:19 praying--*Lord, our working agreement is that you open the doors for service and supply our needs and we follow. We're cashing your check that Paul wrote down in Phillipians 4:19. Thank You for our needs supplied.* Ordinarily no mail is put in the boxes on Sunday or Holidays. I went to the Post Office in good faith on Monday morning which was Labor Day. There was one lone envelope in the box from Central Christian Church of Dodge City, Kansas. It contained a check for \$138.62. Al Hickerson, Elder of the Church, had placed the letter in the mail on Sunday evening. It was post marked "Sun, PM, September 5, 1976." It traveled two hundred miles and with our balance of \$19.73 paid the rent and we rejoiced in the Lord and His Promise!

Addition decrees that \$19.93 plus \$138.62 does not equal \$175; but, it did equal the rent payment. While contemplating the dilemma, our good Landlord, Bro. C.O. Britton, an elder here in Bible Christian Church, came across the alley to tell us that as long as he had some things stored in our garage the rent would be \$150, not \$175. Now, we rejoiced twice over!!

**GOD IS FAITHFUL** in keeping His Promises! If we will

follow His invitation to pray, then we discover He does impossible things and the heavenly currency of His blessing becomes the provision for our lives!

## **Always Pray.**

The Lord was not through teaching me about praying. This phrase "always praying" was a BIG LESSON for me.

**LUKE 18:1-8--"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart."**

I searched out the matter of ALWAYS PRAYING with these words--\*

**\*WHY?**

**\*WHEN?**

**\*HOW?**

**\*WHAT?**

**\*WHO?**

## **Always Pray - WHY?**

Without doubt Jesus' third statement--MEN OUGHT TO ALWAYS PRAY--is a k-e-y to effective praying.

**WHY PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING?** Beyond the fact that Jesus said so, is the realization that **GOD IS INTERESTED** in ALL THINGS. Why else did Jesus say in Matthew 10:29-31 that the hairs on our head are numbered and God keeps a running census on the sparrows that fly through the air? Note the phrase--"Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."(12) In context it is a contrast picture telling us that God cares for everything, but **MAN IS AT THE TOP OF HIS LIST!**

The devil has hoodwinked us into believing that prayer is for religious matters in church buildings--weddings, worship, funerals and sick Saints--on Sundays, Wednesdays and Holy Days. Too many think that proper prayers are prayed by Preachers and Priests. You'll wear your eyes out looking for one example in the New Testament of one person leading a whole group in prayer. Prayer is a personal matter and while I

may pray a personal prayer in the midst of a group, I cannot pray their prayer.

## Always Pray - WHEN?

Some say--No way, I can't pray all the time. One person said to me--"ALWAYS doesn't mean always and ALL doesn't mean 100%!"

The Greek word from which we translate this word "always" is "PANTOTE." This word is also translated as ever, evermore and always. Note these three examples out of the forty times the word is used in the New Testament:

1. John 11:42--"I knew that thou hearest me *always*."
2. II Corinthians 2:14--"which *always* causeth us to triumph."
2. Hebrews 7:25--"he *ever* liveth to make intercession."

If I entertain the suggestion that ALWAYS doesn't mean always, then radical questions can be raised about the above promises such as:

1. In John 11:42 was Jesus saying that the Father heard him m-o-s-t of the time, NOT always?
2. In II Corinthians 2:14: do we triumph part of the time but not all the time?
3. Does Hebrews 7:25 mean that Jesus makes intercession for us most of the time but not forever?

Perish the thought! The Word says it! That settles it! God heard Jesus **ALL** the time! We triumph **ALWAYS!** Jesus intercedes for us **FOREVER** and **EVER!** A-n-d "men ought to **always** pray." (Luke 18:1)

I remind us there are other Scriptures that exhort us to pray *always*:

- I Thessalonians 5:17--"pray without ceasing."
- Romans 12:12--"continuing steadfastly in prayer."
- Ephesians 6:18--"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

## HOW?

How can a person be ALWAYS PRAYING?

The GREAT REQUIREMENT for ALWAYS praying is expressed in these words:

For thus says the High and Lofty One  
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
"I dwell in the high and holy place,  
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit,"(13)

The next words of Jesus, recorded after the key words we're looking at in Luke 18, concerns the Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the Temple to pray. You will remember God was not pleased with the bragging Pharisee; but, of the contrite Publican he said:

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.(14)

Folding hands, closing eyes and bowing heads may be desirable on occasions, but is NOT required for talking to God. The GREAT REQUIREMENT is humbling self to seek God.

If we are *willing* but not *able*, God specializes as the Great Enabler in providing us with the necessary power.

I bowed down before the Lord with mustard-seed faith and prayed this prayer.

Lord, praying always about everything is impossible for me. However, I know that with You all things are possible, so please make me to be able to follow Your Will in this matter of always praying. Thank You for working out Your Will in my life for Your Glory! A-men.

My first lesson in ALWAYS PRAYING took place in my office behind a typewriter.

**LESSON #1** for me: PRAY before you type and as you type. So, when it was time to type I prayed--"*Lord, help me cut this stencil. Lord, give me wisdom in writing this letter in Jesus' Name, A-men.*"

A ringing telephone, when I am busy, has been a source of irritation across the years.

**LESSON #2** for me: A ringing phone is a call to prayer. As the

phone rings I learned to pray--*Lord, be in charge of this phone call in Jesus Name*. What do you end prayer with? (- - -)? So, as I reached for the phone I prayed and picked up the receiver and said "A-MEN!" Lyle Marshall, one of our elders, said: "Preacher, what is going on down there? A prayer meeting?" I chuckled and said, "Yes. But it's all over now."

Now a beautiful thing about ALWAYS PRAYING is that God can answer prayers in an instant. Early on in the Lord teaching me to ALWAYS PRAY, I was in a Faith Alive Revival with the Copeland, Kansas Christian Church. I had left Minneola with one of our members brother having passed away. The brother lived away from there at Meade. The agreement was that our Youth Minister, Clyde Goff, would minister the Memorial Service. Monday morning, at preacher Walter Birney's house in Copeland, the phone rings. Before I even think where I am or whose phone is ringing, I pray--*Lord, be in charge of this phone call in Jesus' Name*". Walter answers and says, "Wilbur, it's for you." Clyde Goff was calling to say, "Wilbur, I'm real sorry but I cannot have the funeral. We have five teachers out of school today." (In addition to serving the church as Youth Minister, Clyde taught elementary school.) "There is no way I can get off to do that funeral since five of our teachers are out with the flu," said Clyde. As he talked to me, Ed Goble, School Principal and one of the church Deacons, who already reviewed the matter and made a decision, walked into the room and said, "Mr. Goff, who are you calling?" "I'm calling our Preacher to tell him I can't preach the funeral and for him to come home from the Revival." Mr. Goble said, "Just tell the Preacher that I'll take your class and we can double up some others and you do the funeral. Tell the Preacher to stay in Copeland with the Revival." So, you understand why I attribute this instant answer to PRAYING ALWAYS.

### Always Prayer: WHAT?

GOD CAN BLESS, CHANGE, MAGNIFY and ENHANCE anything and everything. So, we o-u-g-h-t to PRAY about ALL THINGS, always!

In preparation for using the mustard seed faith to determine WHAT we will pray for I want to share a true story about a group of average men. We were studying the matter of Prayer and came to this text, Philippians 4:4-6. For variety, I read the text from The Living Bible.

"Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice!

Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do. Remember that the Lord is coming soon.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank Him for His answers."(15)

The proposition of the lesson was: If we prayed always that would mean everything must be included in our praying. The men responded by saying "No, preacher, you cannot bother God with a lot of little stuff. We are to pray about big things." I answered, "All right, men, for the sake of discussion I'll accept your premise--Pray about big things not little things. Now, what are the big things?" Their response, as it often was, "You know, Preacher." "No, guys, you're doing the pitching in this half of the inning. I have the chalk and a blackboard to write the big things down. You name them," So after a bit they agreed on three big things we ought to pray about. I wrote them on the board--1. Who you will marry?; 2. Your life's work and 3. Where you will go to college? I said "Men, I agree with you that these are big things that ought to be matters of prayer. Now, I want to nail something down. This is personal and I will never reveal how you voted individually."

Proposition #1--"How many of you men prayed about the woman you married? Or did you just fall in love with your high school sweetheart or meet the girl of your dreams in college or in the Armed services?"

ANSWER: 0

Proposition #2--"Men, did you pray about your occupation? Or, did you follow what your Dad did or the leading of an aptitude test?"

ANSWER: 0

Proposition #3--"Men, I know that over half of you have gone to college. Did you pray about that and where you should go?"



## ANSWER: 0

I commended the men for their honesty, but told them that since their approach to praying only about BIG THINGS had added up to "0", that I would stick with the seeming *impossible* challenge of PRAYING ALWAYS about ALL THINGS.

This lesson of ALWAYS PRAYING was spoken clearly to me by a farmer at Circleville, Kansas. As people were leaving the church building on Wednesday evening of our Faith Alive Revival, a wheat and cattle farmer paused and asked me a question: "Preacher, do you know what I've learned about prayer?" I responded, "No, please tell me." He said, "Well, I've learned that if I don't pray about everything, I don't pray about nuthin'." Later I learned that his ALWAYS PRAYING included talking to the Lord about cows and calves, the drilling, growing and cutting of the wheat, along with the nuts and bolts of repairing machinery and the catching of coyotes.

Both the HOW and WHAT of ALWAYS PRAYING is illustrated by the simple story of a cleaning woman.

Several ministers had gathered to discuss difficult Bible questions. The particular proposition under consideration was I Thessalonians 5:17--"Pray without ceasing."

Various suggestions were offered, and at last one of the number was appointed to write an essay on the subject to be read at the next meeting.

A servant who was cleaning heard the discussion and exclaimed:

"What! a whole month to tell the meaning of that text? Why, it's one of the easiest and best verses in the Bible."

"Well, well, Mary," said one minister, "What do you know about it? Can you pray all the time?"

"Oh, yes sir!"

"What! when you have so many things to do?"

"Why, sir, the more I have to do, the more I can pray."

"Indeed! well Mary, most people wouldn't agree with you. How do you do it?"

"Well, sir," said the girl, "When I first open my eyes in the morning, I pray: Lord, open the eyes of my understanding; and while I'm dressing, I pray that I may be clothed with the robe of

righteousness; while I am washing, I ask to have my sins washed away. As I begin work, I pray to have the strength for all the work of the day; while I kindle the fire, I pray that revival may be kindled in me. While preparing and eating breakfast, I ask to be fed with the Bread of Life and the pure milk of the Word. As I sweep the house, I pray that my heart may be swept clean of all impurities. And as I am busy with the little children, I look up to God as my Father and pray that I may always have the trusting love of a child and so I pray my way through the day. Everything I do gives me a thought for prayer." "Enough! Enough, cried the minister! These things are often hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes, as the Lord Himself said. Go on Mary, pray without ceasing as we thank the Lord for this lesson."

## Always Pray - WHO?

Paul answered the "Who" question when he wrote to Timothy:

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."(16)

I suggest that people are at the top of God's concerned list as the entire Biblical record testifies: It is written about people, by people inspired of God, for people, because God loves people!

For many years I carried around a long PRAYER LIST of people and needs of the Kingdom. I quit that many years ago when the Lord taught me to ALWAYS PRAY. Now I use a LIVING PRAYER LIST. I have a walking agreement with the Lord that every person I meet in a conversational way during a day, I PRAY FOR THEM. Does anything happen by chance in the life of a Christian? My studied conclusion is NO! Nothing happens by chance. The people I meet in a day's time has a Divine design for me. I try to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" as James 1:19 says. So, while I'm listening and looking directly into my fellow human beings eyes, I lift them up before the throne of God in PRAYER. I used to get frustrated at Missionaries that showed scores of slides of

black, white, brown, yellow people. People I didn't know and probably never would in this world. Then, the Spirit moved in my heart to say--You can pray for those people. Now that's a beautiful opportunity, so while I'm sitting there looking at the picture I lift those people up in prayer. True, I do not know who the people are but God knows. If they are Believers then I ask the Lord to fill them with His Spirit that they may be strong in His service. If they are pagans then I pray that the Spirit will bear witness through the Word to convict them of sin and bring them to Jesus. Now, I grow frustrated when the Missionary goes too fast and I don't have time to finish praying for the people in the picture.

You see, there really is no end to prayer opportunities. People, people everywhere--in the doctor's waiting room, in the church committee meeting, the clerks in the stores and the teller in the bank. As Joel said--"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!" Joel 3:14. And, you and I can be a vehicle of prayer to bless men and women in a way that will ring bells of VICTORY for all eternity!

That is why Jesus said:

"Men always ought to pray and not to lose heart." Luke 18:1.

## Not Fainting.

LUKE 18:1--"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart."

Here is what the business world calls the bottom line. God's bottom line is a blessing--if we will be ALWAYS PRAYING, we will NOT FAINT.

We cannot p-r-a-y and f-a-i-n-t at the same time. Here is a personal letter that illustrates this truth.

First let me say that Jim and Vona Stacy preached ten miles down the road from us at Fowler, Kansas. At the time of this incident they were ministering at Gallup, New Mexico. Jim died on August 11, 1971 in a one-car wreck. He and his family were returning home following a week of camp at Como, Colorado where he served as camp evangelist. His son, Mark,

age seven, injured in the same wreck, died on August 13.

Their son, Steve, was of high school age at the time and this casualty tripped him up on the road of life. Following the wreck, Steve and his mother and family moved to Scottsbluff, Nebraska. About a year later we went by to see Vona, Steve and the rest of the family. Steve wasn't home but I left him a cassette tape about God's love. He wrote me this letter in the following days.

Dear Wilbur,

I was surprised to hear from you. I've lost contact with everyone in your area and don't hear from anyone in Kansas.

My mom told me you had stopped by when you were here. I don't believe I've been to church since that time, but that has little to do with my relationship to God. There comes a time when one has questions that his religion cannot answer without falling back on the old "faith" trip that Christianity used to explain away many of the questions without Biblical answers. I reached that point a long time ago.

I haven't had time to listen to the cassette tape you sent. I don't have a player.

Yes, we all have problems but rarely do I burden God with mine because I feel that my destiny is shaped the way I choose. Only when I can't find my own solution do I ask for help.

I keep a close watch on all Karmic aspects of my every action, and I've found that the more good Karma one generates, the more he receives.

Thanks for the tape and your letter, and I promise to try to listen to it sometime.

Signed-Steve Stacy(17)

Why was Steve losing heart on the road of life? The answer is contained in his own words: "Yes, we all have problems, but rarely do I burden God with mine... Only when I can't find my own solution do I ask help." The very first time I shared this letter was in a Revival at Havensville, Kansas in 1974. Ron and Haven Howard, Gospel Singers, were in charge of the music. When the Invitation Hymn and Closing Prayer were finished, Haven Howard came running back to the door. She said, "Did you know Steve Stacy is my cousin?" I replied, "No, I had no idea you even knew him." Haven con-

tinued, "Do you know where Steve Stacy is tonight?" "No," I said, "where is he?" "He's in Manhattan Christian College because people prayed," Haven responded.

You see, it was the lack of prayer that caused Steve to stumble and it was much praying by scores of concerned people and finally Steve himself that brought him back to walk with the Lord.

"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart." Luke 18:1

Prayer is more important than the mind of man can ever imagine. My years have taught me three probable regrets we will have when we see Jesus on the other shore.

#1. That I loved not nearly enough;

#2. That I prayed so little and

#3. That I came so late.

God delights in being burdened with our burdens which of course is no burden to HIM. Peter expressed this thought when he wrote--"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." I Peter 5:7.

I tell people--*No need for God and me to worry. I let Him do the worrying.* Meaning that God does not worry for He is in a position to cause all things to work together for His glory and my good. See Romans 8:28.

The words of Henry Ward Beecher bless me:

Prayer covers the whole of a man's life. There is no thought, feeling, yearning, or desire, however low, trifling, or vulgar we may deem it, which, if it affects our real interest or happiness, we may not lay before God and be sure of sympathy. His nature is such that our often coming does not tire Him. The whole burden of every man may be rolled on to God and not weary Him, though it has wearied the man.(18)

If I grasp God's hand ALL THE TIME in PRAYER, then nothing can harm me or cause me to lose heart (faint) on the road of life.

A **Big lesson** was waiting for me on the night of July 3rd, 1971 concerning PRAYING and NOT LOSING HEART.

About 10:30 I retired for bed on that Saturday night. At 11

o'clock the door bell rang. Three men--Merle McInteer, Glenn McInteer and the Minister of the Methodist church, Dale Clare--were standing at my door. Dale said, "Wilbur, your son, Lynn, has been killed in a car wreck." "Come in" I said, "while I dress and I'll go to the scene of the wreck with you."

That old barbed wire fence around the wheat field that I told about earlier in seeking the lost hammer, came back one more time. This time it was in the form of the hard wood floor of our bedroom. I knelt in desperation and weakness to pray this simple prayer--Dear God. Help! I'm weak and need your strength. Please make me strong! In Jesus' Name."

God heard that prayer and answered in multiplied ways--##

## My wife, Imalee, had gone to the Hospital to pick up our daughter, Teresa, from work. Our son had said he would be home at 10:30. Seeing the Sheriff's car heading out of town, they drove south of town on the road Lynn would be traveling. Turning East down the Cemetery Road they saw the lights from the Police cars, ambulance, etc. Cresting the top of the hill there was our yellow Opel car on its top out in the field of wheat stubble. As they stepped from their car, Teresa, said "It's time to pray." Strength was being given.

## Quickly I dressed and went downstairs to tell our other son, Galen, what had happened and to ask him to stay there with our eleven year old daughter, Lisa, who was asleep. When I arrived at the scene of the wreck, my son's body was on a stretcher and being carried towards the ambulance. The Lord gave me strength to ask the men to put him down. I knelt beside him to say for the last time--"Son, I Love you and Jesus loves you!" A smile swept across his face that would remain.

## The Lord gave me strength to check the vehicle he had been driving. This was good because later when I sought answers, they were not available.

## The Lord gave certain strength for us to advise the Doctor and call the Minnis Funeral Home.

## Prayer circles for us were born that night. We had prayed across the previous twenty years of our home life from

time to time, not always on a regular basis and never in a circle. That night before we called my Parents, Galen & Tempest Johnson in Cherryvale, Kansas and Imalee's parents, Raymon & Ina Barrick along with our other daughter, Rebecca, who was also with them in Wichita, we turned out the upstairs lights and retired to the basement. There we joined hands together in a family prayer circle asking again for the strength of the Lord.

The words of the Psalms were real beyond words.

"God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble."(19)

"They go from strength to strength;"(20)

**## Strength to strength** unfolded like a warm blanket surrounding our hearts. Dr. Stephens, as acting Coroner, completed his work and came to our house at two o'clock that Sunday morning. He said to Imalee and me, "You can have a shot or I can give you a pill." I knew well what he meant having ministered to scores of families across the years--a knock-out shot or a tranquillizer for frayed nerves. I looked at Imalee and said to the Doctor, "No thank you. We don't want any shots or pills,"

**##** Sunday morning was coming on and not knowing what else to do after making the necessary phone calls, we retired for what might have been sleepless hours, except that I prayed--**"God, somewhere I read in your Word that there is such a thing as ministering Angels. If you have any left over around Heaven tonight, we could use some down here."** Imalee and I remarked the next morning after several hours of peaceful sleep that Somebody had been there and it was not the sandman. God's Angels ministered peace and strength!

**## The Lord gave strength upon strength** as we assembled with the brethren on that Sunday morning. The hymns took on new meaning. The communion table was very special and it was there the Lord gave me a vision of **STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT**. In moments of meditation I saw Heaven's Communion Table stretching into the sky for miles without number. Jesus was seated at the far end of that beautiful table.

Countless numbers of people were seated along each side of this table of the Lord. The last person seated on the right hand side of the table down at this end was my son, Lynn. My hope climbed up high and my strength was made even stronger.

## "The Joy of the Lord is your strength,"(21) said Nehemiah in his book. The reality of this was experienced as we spent our time at the Funeral Home in singing and praising God!

## God's strength in us came to full blossom in our spirits as plans for the Wednesday Memorial Service unfolded. It became a celebration of victory in Jesus! Our brothers-in-law, W.A. Wheat (husband of Imalee's sister, Fay) and Harold Prough (husband of my sister, Janet) planned their messages as a celebration of faith completed! When I asked our organist, Esther Kennedy, to play--"We'll Work 'Til Jesus Comes"-- as we marched out at the close of the service, she said "That is not a funeral song but I'll play it softly." I said, "Ole faithful organist, when you play it, open the organ up full volume as that is the theme of our hearts--We too, will work until Jesus comes, then we'll be gathered home!" And that's the way it was with strength blossoming out like a lilac bush in the springtime.

If I could name the day and hour that ALWAYS PRAYING had a birth in my spirit, it would be July 3, 1971. As the song says--"**I found the answer, I learned to pray.**"

**"And He spoke a parable to them to this end, that men always ought to pray and not to lose heart."** Luke 18:1.

### **The Question.**

The only question Jesus asked that He never answered is the one at the end of this parable.

**"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"** Luke 18:8

This text has been hitched to all kinds of thoughts and themes. In the context of Jesus' proposition--"**men always ought to pray and not to lose heart.**" In the parable about the Widow seeking justice from the Judge he told to



illustrate the proposition, the question at the end signifies--  
**WILL MEN EXERCISE THEIR FAITH TO THE END IN ALWAYS PRAYING?**

IF I had MORE FAITH, I would ALWAYS PRAY may be our first response to Jesus challenging statement, "**Men ought to a-l-w-a-y-s pray.**"

When Jesus brought His disciples face to face with an impossible-for-men-challenge in His teaching or a needed miracle in serving, they often responded with "GIVE US MORE FAITH". Such was the case in chapter 17 just prior to the parable on prayer we have been considering.

Jesus had taught them about a brother sinning and their need to forgive even seven times in one day. Luke 17:3,4. Their immediate response to this difficult challenge was:

"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith' "(22)

And the Lord replied, "If you had faith as a mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." (23)

First of all I perceive that Jesus said you're NOT going to get any MORE FAITH. If you would take hold of life right where you are with your "mustard seed faith," you could uproot a tree. NO MORE FAITH because you are not using the faith you have. If you won't use the pint you have, so-to-speak, why should I give you a quart or a gallon? It is illustrated by these words of an anonymous poet:

The question is not what you would do with a million, if a million should be your lot.

The question is-what are you doing with the dollar and a quarter you now already have got. (24)

What we do with little we will do with much, be it time, money or faith. The Holy Spirit's power makes it possible for us to respond to Jesus' challenge--"**Men ought to ALWAYS PRAY.**"

PRAYER is a KEY to all God's treasure vaults. Every grace

of God--His unmerited favor, enabling power and blessings of enhancement upon us is obtained with the K-E-Y of PRAYER.

Elwood School was a one-room country school with all eight grades. It was there I learned the three R's including this Scottish legend about the Shepherd Boy and the strange key.

A shepherd boy tending his sheep on a mountainside saw a strange flower, one he had never seen before in his whole Scottish life. He thought at first he would pick one blossom, but as he pulled on the stem the entire clump--blooms, stems and roots--came loose. As he cupped it in his hands to take in the beauty and enjoy the fragrance, a great rock in front of him opened up like doors on a vault. Within appeared to be a hall leading to a brightly lit room beyond. He did what any curious person would do--looked around, entered cautiously and walked slowly towards the bright light. He gazed in astonishment at the contents of the great cavern-like room--diamonds, sapphires, rubies, gold. Again he did what humans do, laid down the clump of flowers, and began picking up some of the jewels. He filled his pockets, boots, cap, rolled some up in his shirt and filled both hands. As he started to leave a strange voice said: "Shepherd boy! Shepherd boy! You're leaving the best behind." The lad turned and looked wistfully at all he was leaving, but continued to walk towards the opening. Again the voice: "Shepherd boy! Shepherd boy! You're leaving the key behind." He thought--Key? There was no key to this place! He hesitated no more but walked out into the sunlight. The great rock door closed behind him and all the jewels he carried turned to dust. For the last time the voice spoke--"Shepherd Boy, the key to it all was the beautiful clump of flowers." The key was locked in the vault and picking more flowers would not open the door again.

Most keys have a stem and some notches. I suggest that the k-e-y to the vaults of God consists of a stem--our WILL and two NOTCHES--FAITH and PRAYER.

As we started this chapter with prayer, let us press on with prayer now.

**"Jesus, I come boldly to the Throne of Grace in Your Name.**

**Thank You for opening my eyes to some powerful possibilities of prayer.**

**I want to be an answer of FAITH to your unanswered question--Will men still be always praying when you**

**break through the clouds of glory? I want to say, Yes, Lord. I WILL!**

**Now, fill me with your Holy Spirit. Help me to see life as a treasure-room and my prayers as a key to that room to help distribute God's jewels to a world full of needs.**

**Cause each opportunity of people, plans, problems, and things to become a call to PRAYER that I may be found ALWAYS PRAYING for YOUR GLORY and the good of the Kingdom! A-men."**

## **FAITH ALIVE IN HEART, HOME and CHURCH**

### **NOTES - Chapter 5**

1. Luke 18:1-8
2. Thomas A. Edison out of my file
3. Luke 11:1
4. Clement of Alexandria - 150-220 A.D.  
The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations, Pg.338,  
Edited by Frank S. Mead. Used by permission.  
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Britain for Peter Davies Ltd., by Butler and Tanner Ltd.,  
Frome and London.
5. G.Ashton Oldham - 1877--, Pg.345
6. Joseph Fort Newton - 1878-1949, Pg.345
7. From article - "The Restoration of Prayer" by Dean E.  
Walker. From Christian Standard-October 18, 1970 -  
(935) Pg.7, The Standard Publishing Company, Cincin-  
nati, Ohio. Division of Standex International  
Corporation Used by Permission.  
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Dean E. (Keister) Walker of Milligan College,  
Tennessee.
8. Luke 18:1,2
9. Chorus--"Got Any Rivers You Think Are Uncrossable..."
10. Luke 18:7
11. Exodus 3:14
12. Matthew 10:29,30
13. Isaiah 57:15
14. Luke 18:13,14
15. Philippians 4:4-6, The Living New Testament by Kenneth  
Taylor, 1971.
16. I Timothy 2:1-4

17. Personal letter to author from Steve Stacy of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, November 22, 1972
18. Henry Ward Beecher, 1813-1887, Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations, Pg.337
19. Psalm 46:1
20. Psalm 84:7
21. Nehemiah 8:10
22. Luke 17:5
23. Luke 17:6
24. Out of my personal file.



**Galen, Kim & Elizabeth  
Johnson**  
1987, Clarksville, Georgia

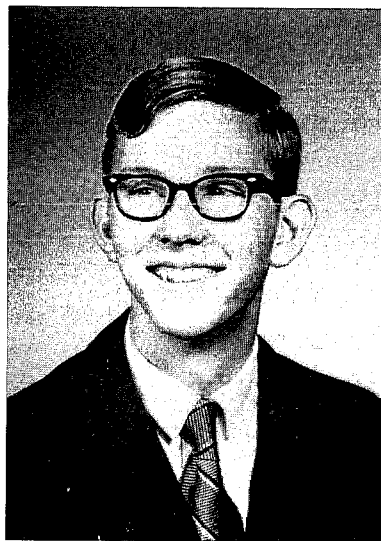
## **A TRIBUTE TO MY SON**

First, he was my son but of far greater importance, he was my brother in the Lord.

**HE FOUGHT THE FIGHT** and did a far better job as a teenager than his father. Never once did he talk back or lie to me or take anything that didn't belong to him.

**HE KEPT THE FAITH** from the day of his second birth when at the age of eight I immersed him into Jesus. He could preach a sermon, teach a class, lead a meaningful discussion group, read the Bible with purpose, pray to a point, plan a worship service, talk to a friend about his Lord, give of his means in a sacrificial way and assist his Lord, the church and preacher father in many other ways.

**HE FINISHED THE COURSE** much sooner than I anticipated; but, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (II Corinthians 5:8)



**LYNN JOHNSON**  
**1953 - 1971**

### **Mom and Dad Reflect**

LYNN was our first born son having three sisters - Teresa, Rebecca and Lisa and one brother - Galen.

Born in Oklahoma City while we were attending Midwest Christian College, he spent most of his adolescent years in Indiana. While we lived at West Lebanon, Indiana, Lynn invited Jesus to be his Saviour and Lord during a revival preached by Cecil Todd. His spiritual growth was phenomenal as indicated in my tribute. He graduated from the Minneola (Kansas) High School in May of 1971 and enrolled to attend Midwest Christian College that Fall.

On Saturday, July 3rd, 1971, Lynn worked all day washing dishes at the Rancho Cafe. He shared supper at that Cafe with his girl friend--Patty Cusick. They spent the later part of the evening talking about the Sunday School class he would begin teaching the next day and together read the eighth chapter of Romans before going home about 10 o'clock. On his way back to town in our 1969 Opel, he had an accident that leaves many questions unanswered. The car turned over end-ways near the Minneola Cemetery some four miles southwest of town. Thus, he graduated to glory.



**Lisa Johnson**  
Age 3 1/2



**Lisa, Age 5**  
1965



**Lisa, Age 6**  
1966



**Lisa**  
Age 25