



Charting the Course:

a devotion by Chuck Hall

A Three Thousand Year Old Secret

Do you sometimes find it difficult to pray? Does your mind wander when you are praying? Do you run out of things to say and feel that you don't spend enough time in prayer? If so, you should consider using the Bible as your prayer book. For over 3,000 years people have looked to the scriptures as a guide to prayer. However, it is a secret to many today who have never been taught that the Bible is a Book of Prayer.

Mary Nell and I have found much strength over the past thirty-eight years in meditating on and praying the scriptures, especially those which record the prayers of our Lord Jesus, the Apostles, and the Psalmists. The Psalms are my favorite. Meditating on the scriptures does not mean that we just sit quietly and silently think about what is written, but we "mutter" or "say out loud over and over again" a particular passage of scripture (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2). This is the Hebrew meaning of meditation. Meditating in this manner causes us to hear the Word of God as we recite it as a prayer. Faith rises up in our spirits, and we more easily express our love to our Father. Meditating on and praying the Scriptures also help us to memorize the Bible. Another great benefit is that meditation in this manner is a proven stress reliever.

Our Lord said that we "should always pray and not give up" (Lk. 18:1). The Parable of the Persistent Widow teaches us to persevere in prayer, crying out to our Father day and night. If we do this, He promises to answer us, and quickly. The key to persevering prayer is to pray in faith according to the will of God (James 1:6-7; I John 5: 14-15). We know that faith comes when we hear and believe the Word of God. The Word and will of God are one and the same. Therefore, when we pray the scriptures we are praying according to the will of God.

Prayer is not about trying to convince a reluctant God to change His mind and do what we want Him to do. It is about our Lord's changing us and helping us to do what He wants us to do. He who said, "I am the LORD, I change not..." (Mal. 3:6), also invites us to "...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Recently, I heard Mike Bickle of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City say, "The foundational principle of prayer: ***God speaks and moves our heart; then we speak and move His heart.*** The result is that God's resources are released into the earthly realm. . . . In intercession we tell God what He tells us to tell Him. Intercession causes us to internalize God's Word by saying it back to Him many times. ***Each time we say what God says, it marks our spirit and changes us.*** . . . Intercession draws us in intimacy with His heart while it unifies and transforms."

All that Mike Bickle is exhorting us to do is accomplished when we pray the scriptures out loud back to God. ***I believe that praying the scriptures is the key to a dynamic prayer life!*** I have found that when I pray the scriptures out loud to God, I not only pray in faith according to the will of God, but my mind is kept from wandering and I remain focused on God. I no longer struggle to pray, feeling that time is slowly dragging by. I can spend much more time in prayer than ever before. Praying in this manner, I do not find it unusual to spend one, two, or even three hours in joyful communion with the Father!

Let us be encouraged to listen to God as we search the scriptures, hear what He is saying, and pray back to Him what He is saying to us. This is pleasing to God and is one of the many ways that we express our love to Him. Let us ask the Lord to help us to give ourselves to Him in prayer and allow Him to help us and to change us to do all that He wants us to do.