

True Prayer in the Spirit

Over the years I have tried and used many ways and means of prayer. All these ways have added something to my life with the Lord. In recent years I have been using a way devised (from scripture and life) by Dr. Larry Crabb in two of his books – “The Pressure’s Off” and “The Papa Prayer”. What follows is my experience of using these as a means of learning to pray on a continuous basis. What is unique about his writing and suggestions on prayer is that he places the need to establish relationship with God first before we do anything else normally done in prayer, such as worship, praise, thanks, confessions, petitions and intercession.

He says that most of our prayer is self oriented, to do with our needs and wants or for others in the same way. Crabb rightly points out that in the Lord’s prayer and in the two commandments taught by Jesus that God is the first and primary focus and the beginning point for all prayer in relation to the priorities of life. He says that once we establish relationship with the Lord in the Spirit, then we can move into the normally accepted elements of prayer. He points out that if we do not establish relationship with the Lord each time we set aside time to pray, then we may be missing the mark.

For some years I have used Crabb’s suggestions and found a new depth in prayer that I thought must exist but had never experienced. Gradually over time, I have written down a composite of Crabb’s suggestions and modified them according to my experience of using them. What follows is my current update, which has been modified to make my experience of the Lord more what I expect He wants and needs it to be. The use of such a doorway into prayer takes time to learn. It is quite outside modern man’s rush to gain spiritual gratification.

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Summary

- 1 Relational prayer to establish and reaffirm relationship with God
 - Present yourself to God
 - Purging myself of anything that blocks my relationship with God
 - Approaching God as the first thing in my life
 - Attend to how I am thinking of God
- 2 Worship God
- 3 Give thanks and praise to God
- 4 Petitions (supplications) to God
- 5 Intercession for others

Prayer steps

1 Relational Prayer – to daily establish (and if need be) deepen my relationship with God – to remain in Him and have His word remain in me, all before I begin worship, praise, thanks, petition and intercede for others. (Based on The Pressure’s Off & The Papa Prayer by Larry Crabb and other aspects learned in usage)

• **Present yourself to God**

Tell God about yourself – how you are right now, mentioning all troubles and burdens.

- Be aware that nothing will make God reject you just as you are.
- Stand before Him exactly as you are. In that way He can welcome you into better relationship with Him.
- Tell Him how you are right now. Be real with Him, holding nothing back, without pretence.

- Look deeply inside to see what is going on inside you. (Things like trying to manage everything, life and family issues) Ultimately, no management is required, as everything can be placed in His hands.
- Be brutally honest. Know that God sees everything anyway. Be authentic about yourself, your relationship with Him and others and the difficult issues of your life
- Face and express your emotions, rage, fear, anxiety, exhaustion, rejections, aloneness or confusions, along with your compassion, kindness and joy – pretend about nothing.
- Don't deny things, nor do the opposite and be obsessive about them.
- Tell God what is inside you. Get to realize that nothing but Him in this world can satisfy.
- Express your inadequateness and emptiness, or inability to focus enough on Him, rather than protect ourselves or feign completeness. Tell the Lord that you know that only He can keep you in this life – and by faith know that He does.

Remember these things:

- *Tell the Lord that on your own you can do or change nothing. Only through Him can anything be achieved. So present yourself just as you are.*
- *Knowledge and wisdom without relationship with Him is worthless.*
- *You need to **stop trying** to get where you want to go. Living this life is more to do with the journey than the destination. **Be still** long enough before Him to know where you are. **Being still and quiet** are very important.*
- *Make presenting yourself to God a lifestyle, so that He will see your openness to Him.*
- *As you present yourself to God and He'll will be present with you and for you.*
- *All this is to do with deciding to stand with and rely on Him alone.*

• **Attend to how you are thinking of God**

- Attend to whom you think you are talking to. (the most important person in the whole universe) "If I do not KNOW you Lord, I cannot have your life" (Zoe) Do this whether or not you have any sense (knowing) that He is present or not.
- Don't be concerned that no picture of God or clear idea of who He is comes to mind when you pray. (Be ware of error of initiating visualization – See Jeremiah 14:14, 23:16-18 & Ezekiel 13:1-9) Recognize His attributes - that he is unchangeable, incomparable, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscience, omnipresent, Faithfulness, good, having foreknowledge, holiness, loving, merciful, patient, supreme and sovereign over all.
- Be aware that the spiritual journey is by faith in God. Although it is rooted in the revealed truth of God, it is centered in the actual experience of God in faith, by active believing (in His life within you, not self works or law) and through the Holy Spirit. (recognize that if there is no experience of Him, then fear and loneliness could be present) Go about life naturally, believing all things, by the Spirit and by His Word.
- Attend to what you experience of God through His Spirit, but also focus on what you know is true from His written word. (e.g. scriptures to do with who we are in Christ and instructions like Matthew 6:33, or Ephesians 6, the whole armour of God, or Luke 21:36. Focus on Him to the exclusion of all else.
- Let the Spirit remind you of all that Jesus said, especially that even though we have trouble, everything is under control and He has overcome the world. That is why abiding is important. Remember His Emmanuel Agenda for you – see The Pressure's Off by Crabb
- Notice when He pours love into your heart. (Romans 5:5) True love (agape) can only be from Him. (out of abiding, oneness, union, knowing)
- Trust (involves surrender, to the degree of total abandonment, knowing, abiding) in the Spirit's anointing, especially that He will increasingly grant you the belief, knowing, passion and wisdom to handle every situation.

Remember these things:

- *His sovereignty. (God rules over all, although allowing man's free will)*

- *We are never more fully who we really are than when we attempt to follow God whether we experience Him or not. Faith, trust and believing on our side, leads to revelation from the Spirit in the heavenly realms (2 Cor 4:18) and is more important than sight, experience or understanding.*
- *Prayers in a state of dryness are those that may please Him most.*
- *If you attend to God and sense only darkness, you are perhaps in the best school for learning to pray.*
- *As far as is possible, ignore any suffering or life issues as you attend to God. Put these aside as these stop the abiding. Pause to do this. Focus on Him. He knows what you have already mentioned. Focus on God Himself. This is learned gradually.*
- *Don't expect your sense of God's presence to directly relate to what you presented to him. It may or may not. Abiding is far broader than our concerns.*
- *Jesus is our bridge between us and God. So we must have communion with Him.*
- *We become ourselves and to know ourselves by knowing Him as He really is because it is His life that is within us. Know Him – know ourselves.*
- *Attending to Him is necessary before we purge ourselves of whatever is blocking our way to a proper and cleansed relationship with God.*
- *He is the only One to whom we can come for true spiritual life.*
- *None of this can be rushed.*

● **Purging myself with anything that blocks my relationship with God.**

- Remember that the Spirit of God Himself is in me and the Spirit in me is carrying God's voice into my heart where I can hear Him (know Him).
- Be willing to recognize and confess any obstacles we have created between ourselves and God – such as unbelief, worry, anger or being off balance over the offences of others, or fear for any reason, or not giving God time due to Him. Sinful behaviour limits abiding in Him and Him in us. (see Psalm 66:18 and 1 John 3:6) Worry can lead to striving, self-effort and not yielding to Him. (working things out in our minds is not faith)
- Reflect on what is in you – attitude, motive, determinations. Search me O God is the prayer. Assume that what is in you may have its roots in a preoccupation with yourself, your desire, (wanting your own way against God or will for yourself or others, or reacting to not getting it) your dreams, your disappointments, your pain over criticisms and judgments from others or your losses in life. (a focus on self is not a focus on God) *(Be aware of different types of desires – those that are godly, where prayer of faith can be used, and those that can be considered selfish and require confession)*
- Remember that sometimes we are blind to our worst faults, or even that we may be separate from Him. But if we are patient over time, God will reveal them somehow, either directly or through a friend or circumstance, or His Word.
- Confess any over reliance on created things (people, places, things), or my own self-effort or wanting recognition, instead of relying on God Himself. Some things must be let go to death. Confess my "programs" for myself and for others as sin, or wanting recognition – and let God begin to have His way.
- We, like most people, are probably living in some form of relational sin we cannot see, or reliance on someone or something other than God. We tend to find ways of passing it off, or blaming someone else. Recognize this as a lack of graciousness on our part. Confession brings cleansing.
- This means wanting to see where we are wrong in the way WE relate – to God first - more than we want someone to admit how they are wrong. This might mean insufficient conscious recognition of our wrong, or lack of faith attitude.
- Fear might be at the base of much of our sin we do not see, if there is some perceived or potential loss, of influence or comfort or person, task or ambition in life, or not being prepared to let God control everything. (one difficulty here in caring for others is the danger of overlapping into God's territory – by applying our ideas – when we need to allow them to fail in order to see and learn) Guidance in what we do is important.
- Ask God. Talk it over with Him – He will know what to reveal and when. Thank you Lord.

- Purging or confessing sin often includes brokenness over expecting that nothing will go wrong in life. This is a falsity about life as the Bible clearly shows. Ultimately we learn to just accept what is and ask God what to do...and wait. Also check how committed we are to our own cause (will) rather than God's cause (will). God is still sovereign over everything. He rules, we don't. Recognize that God utilizes the adversities of life to draw us to Him.
- Perhaps somewhere in our psyche we realize how much we would have to lose if we fully embraced God and the Christian life as God intended.
- Purging ourselves before God (by confession and repentance) will mean that the life of Jesus will more fully operate within us and we will learn to depend on God alone.
- The renewal of our mind in all these things is important.

Remember:

- *We should check ourselves out to see what we live to avoid and to gain for ourselves and repent of that attitude of thinking selfishly, instead of doing God's will. Also remember to avoid thinking negatively or about problems, instead of looking to Jesus for all things, with active believing and hoping.*
- *The manifestation of the Spirit is according to our faith and abandonment as His vessels.*
- *Wanting God to arrange our lives to our prescription is wrong, especially when put alongside Paul's ideal of living for Christ and suffering the loss of all things in order to know Him.*
- *We need to abandon ourselves to holiness and God's processes with us. We need to be genuinely open to what is wrong in our lives, confess it and have it cleansed or corrected. Accept everything that comes and look to God for how to handle it.*
- *We need to replace our self-seeking or other concerns with a holy desire to know God and to love God and others above all things. We must ask Him for the fullness of life in Christ that He offers, accepting the full commitment and cost this involves and the service this will entail.*

• **Approaching God as the first thing in my life**

- Now that you have done these first three steps, you can boldly enter in to your Father's presence to experience Him as your greatest good. We need to want Him for His sake and not just for ours and for the benefit of His glory,
- Begin to think and learn about what it really means to know God. He is ruler over the whole universe as well as in our hearts. Amazing!
- Approach God because you want Him, with all of who you are, with all you know God to be, even with any ongoing struggle with the flesh, the world or the devil – or even the church at times. Respond to God's invitation to all who are weary, to all who can't get it right, to all who are struggling to make life work through self-effort, instead of just believing and receiving.
- Tell God, with whatever genuineness is alive within you that you want Him more than any blessing, to know Him, adore Him, enjoy Him and serve Him, because other blessings don't rate compared with having Him. No other way works. That's what real spiritual life is. (Remember God's order of things in the Lord's Prayer and the two commandments of Jesus – God first, us and all other things second).
 - *"Lord I want to be transformed by Your Spirit till I resemble Jesus. i.e. till the life of Jesus fully forms within me and shows through by His Spirit." (Galatians 4:19)*
 - *I surrender to the one goal of knowing You Lord. (Consider Matthew 6:33) I resolve to distrust all joys coming from all other sources, yet to celebrate them as gifts from you – and to live in the freedom You provide with all that feels risky to me."*
- We need to be aware that we may not hear God's voice until we discover within us, an empty, desolate void that is teeming with a passionate desire for fullness of life in Christ's service.
- Until we cut through all the legitimate happiness and pleasure in our lives, or obsession with others, or life's problems, and look beneath every heartache and sorrow in this world, until

we enter the deep spaces of emptiness in our heart, and ignore the froth and bubble of life, we may not fully discover the beautiful sound of our Father's voice.

- But if the concerns of life or other human worldly things have found the way to the centre of our heart, if we are using them to fill up the space reserved for God, then we will not hear His voice.
- The key to experiencing God is to come to Him with an empty heart, to empty our inner space of everything but God (including personal concerns) and then to approach Him with a freely acknowledged emptiness of self – trusting to be filled with His love, joy, peace, patience etc. (this is NOT a blanking out the mind which is risky)
- This can be hard to do because pride gets in the way and it is a scary thing to do. It requires real faith and involves the risk of setting ourselves aside for Him.
- Know that counterfeit satisfactions will not fill the space, nor will 'second thing' pleasures. (things from creation – people, places, events and things)
- You are ready to go all the way with relational prayer if you are not primarily longing for more success in the ordinary things of life, family and business, and if you are aware that your only hope in life is for a real relationship with God. (*God knows how to put all other things in context for you – Mat 6:33*)
- So I now present my body as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is my spiritual service of worship. (Rom 12:1-2)

2 Worship God

Worship is a vital aspect of our relationship with God. It involves:

- Offering myself as a living sacrifice is an act of worship. Romans 12:1-2.
- The offering of our goods and services to each other
- Sacrificial giving of money, time or your personal gifts.
- Displaying acts of love and sacrifice for the benefit of others.
- Singing and meditating privately.
- Worship God for any of His attributes – that he is unchangeable, incomparable, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, wise, or his holiness, justice, long suffering, love, mercy, truth, or worship Him for any of His works, or any of His names, or any of His titles.
- Living one's life out from a base of godly character, and not our emotions.
- Participating in the Lord's supper, in church worship, in private prayer.
- Increasing surrender to God and His ways and will for my life.
- Giving up any self-consciousness I have. Willingness to be a fool for Christ.

Remember:

- *Sacrifice is prefaced by repentance towards God and reconciliation with others.*
- *Sacrifice is not sacrifice unless it costs me something. Then it is more likely to touch God's heart. Sacrifice is only when it costs me something, either in time, money, change of lifestyle, being willing to pay the price for my mistakes, not taking ungodly advantage in the situations of life, or people in my life. Accept suffering in all forms, knowing it has a purpose in God.*
- *Sacrifices and worship do not absolve me from obedience.*

3 Give thanks and praise to God (add your own to these)

- Thank God and praise Him for Who He is, in the midst of every trial or blessing.
- God delights in that because it means we are relying on Him in every issue of life.
- Thank God for the small and big things you experience in life – all blessings and trials.

4 Petitions to God

With the mind of Christ, a knowing that grows out of your desire for Him and the revelation of His Spirit to you, ask for and receive according to His will. The prayer of faith is an important part of

this aspect of prayer..... Let your requests originate from your spiritual communication with God, out of what He says.

5 Intercession for others

To meet the needs for others and for the Lord to change their hearts to do His will. The process of intercession is not just an extended or intensive form of prayer. It is far different from normal prayer and the Lord initiates such intercession in quite incredible ways. It may involve actions rather than prayer. Competence is needed in basic prayer before it is likely the Lord would call us into true intercession.

The process or Intercession

These guidelines were written during the throes of learning about the basics of intercession.

What to do

- Accept the Lord's call on our life for intercession. Present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Accept the Lord's call on our life for the particular intercession.
- Pray/say for the mountain to be removed. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring us on through the victory side of the cross. (That is where we will find detachment – mind and eyes are not looking for change)
- Remind ourselves that this kind of knowing faith comes only by revelation of the Spirit. Faith will bring substance and inner assurance.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to continue His work in forming Christ in the believer. (Gal 4:19)
- Continue to thank God for His mighty hand in it all.

Attitudes to establish and maintain

- Know that there will be dark places to survive. That is where new life begins for the other person. Know that God has chosen intercessors for those who cannot redeem or mature themselves.
- Know that the Lord requires the "death" of the innocent to take the place of the guilty. The guilty have no means of to raise themselves – they need an intercessor.
- Know that such intercessions are the Spirit's intercession, but through bearing the suffering, via the strength and presence of the Lord in our life.
- Know that the Holy Spirit does everything. He is the one that brings us through.
- Know that our submission brings about the dying of the Lord in us and the rising of Zoe life in the other.
- Know we are meant to suffer. Glory finds its manifestation through suffering.
- Know that whatever you fight, fights back – so leave the fight to the Lord.
- Know that such intercession is a supreme proclamation of His truth.

Consequences to manage

- There will be times when all we can do is bear the pain/agony as best we can.
- Being ready to accept suffering as coming from God with the purpose of the expression of love being the cost of intercession.
- Being ready to remain faithful, looking only to Him.
- Not fight what is happening.
- Not being condemned by initial outcomes.
- Not trying to rescue ourselves.
- Recognize that the agony experienced is born by the life of Jesus within us.
- Recognize these as the signs of intercession designed by the Lord.
- Remember that after standing against the enemy for someone else they will often look worse. They may well be under conviction. Allow conviction time to operate.