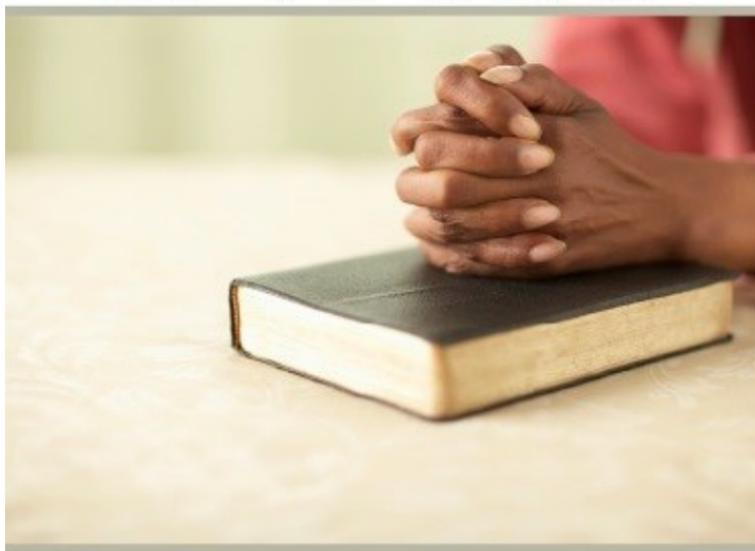


LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY



THOMAS
DONELAN

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TEACH US TO PRAY

By
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Introduction

Just what we need, another book on prayer! When I searched Amazon.com under “prayer” over 88,000ⁱ results came up. Granted, most of them were not in the Christian category, only 2810 titles came up under that, but it is still quite a large library.ⁱⁱ

Regardless I move on challenging traditions with the Bible. Some of the ways that I teach may seem odd or different, that is OK if you think that just look at scripture to see if I am right or not. I am not doing this for money or praise but so Christians can grow in their faith and get closer to the One they profess to love, Jesus.

I use the simple approach of Joe Friday of the old Dragnet series. At some time during the investigation he would need information and he would advise the person he needed “just the facts.” So we are going to pare down all the rhetoric and concentrate on just the fact, the facts from the Bible.

Prelude to Prayer

Just what is prayer? If we are going to study a topic it would make sense to have a working definition of the word. Just to say that I am “having a conversation with my Heavenly Father” is nice but it can present some problems, for instance how are we supposed to follow the command in Luke 18:1?

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; (Luke 18:1)

How could we hope to keep it? What will happen when we stop to eat or sleep, are we in sin for stopping? Would God set us up to fail? If we get into the etymology of the word prayer in the New Testament, we find the word comes from two root words. The first one is *pros* and means to move towards, by the side of, or near to.ⁱⁱⁱ

The second word is *euchomai* which means to make a wish.^{iv} When we combine the two words we come up with a definition of “going towards God and making a wish.”

This puts a new light on Luke 18:1. While I might not always be able to speak to God in prayer, I can always be moving towards Him spiritually and emotionally. When we are moving away from God we are backsliding and in sin (if it is lying, sowing discord, etc.) we need to repent and turn around, that is make a 180 degree turn not a 360 degree turn (then we would still be heading in the wrong direction!).



Prayer is going
Towards God &
Making a
Wish

If we are going to learn about prayer we have to have the same attitude about it as the disciples had: *And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain*

place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. (Luke 11:1)

They show two things each of us should have: a teachable spirit and a humble attitude. These are not just good attitudes to have about prayer but in all things. It would save us a lot of heartache if we did. They also went to the right source to learn: Jesus. So following the disciple's example we will take some time to learn about prayer at the feet of Jesus. Before we start praying, we will see some things we need first in a prelude to prayer.

Having the right heart attitude

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:5)

There is nothing wrong with public prayer but it is the hypocritical attitude. The word hypocrite is a Greek term for an actor that wore a mask. The mask would indicate what character he was and hide his true face. This insincere and prideful attitude praying with fancy words to impress everyone did not impress God at all. They got what they wanted: recognition from men and they had their reward. Jesus also talks somewhat about this in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke 18:

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (Luke 18:11-13)

I like the phrase, “prayed thus with himself.” He was praying with himself, God had nothing to do with that prayer, but the publican, the despised tax collector, humbled himself and he went home justified. The proud, self-serving prayer has no place with God. We need to come to Him humbly and reverently.

Get alone with God.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. (Matthew 6:6)

In contrast to the hypocrite, the man of God gets alone with God. Even Jesus as our perfect example went alone to a mountain to pray (cf. Matthew 14:23) the question is how much more do we as mere men need time alone with the Father?

No empty words.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. (Matthew 6:7)

Vain repetitions, empty words repeated over and over. An example of this from my youth as a Catholic is the practice of the rosary. After my confession, the priest would assign my penance and he would say something like “say the rosary twice.” The rosary was a string of beads with a cross at the bottom and a medallion in the middle and each single bead was an “Our Father” and the groups of three/groups of ten were the “Hail Mary’s” and the medallion we would say the apostles creed. There were a total of sixty prayers in one rosary. You really could not think about what you were saying it was just empty words repeated often. Not really praying to the Father, just saying many words in a religious ritual. I was sincere, I was seeking God, but I was not doing it His way. Even saying the words of the Bible without meaning can be vain and empty.

In fact for many years after leaving the church as I prayed to God I would be fingering the rosary out of habit even though I did not have one.

Having a right relationship

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (Matthew 6:8)

If we are going to have a vital, enriching, active, and successful prayer life it all starts with having a proper relationship with God. He has to be our heavenly Father. We have to be born again from above. This gives us the Spirit of Adoption: *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* (Romans 8:15)

If we do not have a relationship with the Father, we do not have a right to expect Him to honor our request. When I was a teenager, I could go to my Dad and ask him for some money to go out with my friends and if he had it, he would most likely give it to me, but if my best friend Bob asked him the same question the most likely answer would be to “get a job.”

What is the difference? There was an existing relationship with my Dad. Now if I had done something to displease him, then I would not get it either but that did not mean I did not have a relationship nor that he did not love me but that I had made a mistake somewhere along the line. Repentance would restore that relationship just like it does with our Heavenly Father. We have to keep the relationship right and the communication flowing.

The Model Prayer

After this manner pray ye. We do not need to repeat this word for word but what Jesus does is giving us a template to follow as we are praying. Remember the admonition that Jesus gave to us just a few verses ago about vain or empty repetitions. Even something good can be bad if men misuse it.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
(Matthew 6:9)

There are two things on this verse we need to look at; the first is that Jesus directs us to pray to the Father in Heaven. There are some things that I do not claim to understand. One is when men say we are to pray to Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

I had a friend of mine argue with me on this. He said something like (sorry I cannot remember the exact words) Jesus is my betrothed and my beloved and I will pray to him. He is my betrothed and my beloved as well, and I will love Him and sing my praises to Him, but if I really love Him I will do what He says, and He says to pray to the Father. He says it again in a different place:

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. (John 16:23)

The first question is what is meant by the phrase “in that day?” There seems to be a general agreement in the commentaries I read on this passage that this refers to the church after Pentecost^v, or after

the resurrection and ascension^{vi}. In either case, we are living “in that day.” We are commanded by Jesus to ask the Father in the name of Jesus.

Why do we want to argue with Him on this? I remember one noted Pastor said in one of his books (and no I do not wish to embarrass the pastor by naming him) said when he started praying to the Holy Spirit he felt “uncomfortable” but eventually he got used to it. Do you think the reason he was uncomfortable is because he was being disobedient to the plain teaching of God? That eventually he got a seared conscience on the matter? I cannot judge but it fits the facts. We must be very careful not to mishandle the Bible and follow what it says.

The second thing I want you to see from this verse is the adoration towards God. Adoration, praise, and worship are a part of prayer.

The phrase used here hallowed be thy name, hallowed means to make it sacred, holy, or clean. We can do this in several ways:

1. With our lips. Praise and worship, speaking good things about God.
2. With our thoughts. In our thoughts, when we suppress every rising evil, and have our tempers regulated by his grace and Spirit. We need to remember that every action, good or evil, starts off as a thought.
3. In our lives, when we begin in thoughts, continues and ends our works to his glory. If we have an eye to God in all we perform,

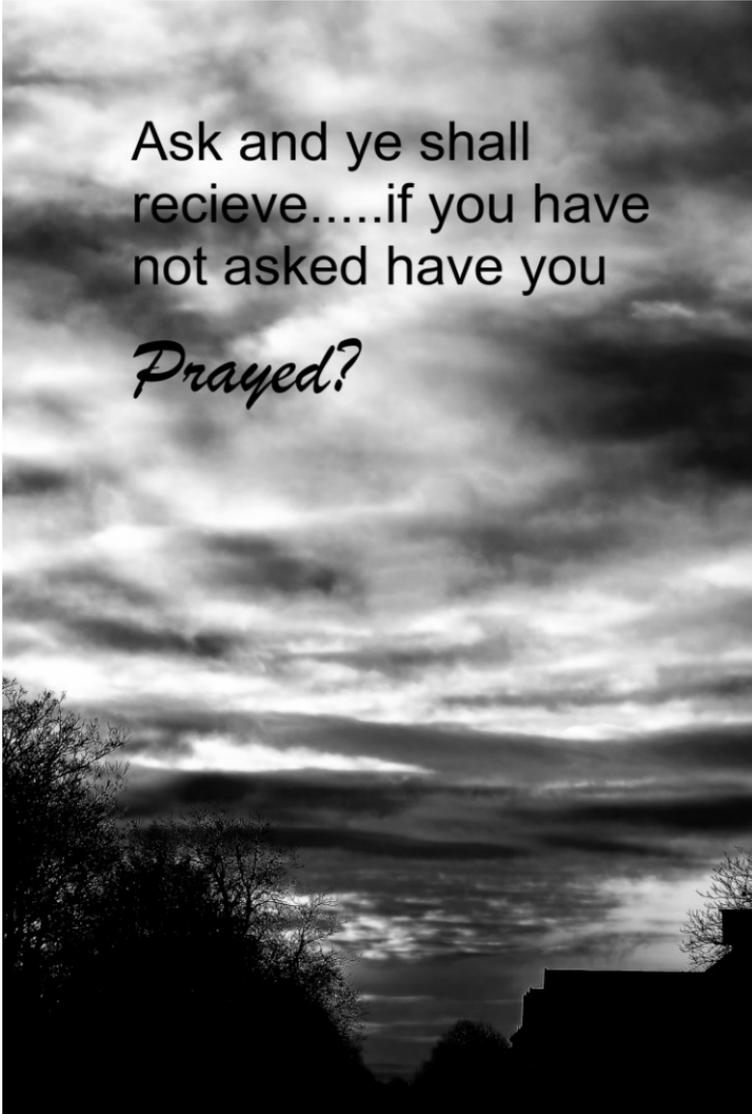
keeping Him foremost in our thoughts, then every action of our day will be an act of religious worship.

4. In our families, when we endeavor to bring up our children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord.
5. Our jobs. Working as in the sight of the holy and just God. If we be boss or employee, working in the secular or the “ministry,” we need to be people of integrity, no deception, lying, being honest in what we say or do. Not being covetous or manipulative with the goal of advancing ourselves at the expense of others and our reputation.

All five of these need to work together. It is easy to say pretty words about God, but an improper thought life that shows up as petty and self-serving actions makes God’s Name hallow (that is empty) and not hallowed (made holy). All this is the adoration. We have not actually asked anything yet so we have not actually prayed (remember to move towards God and wish).

Ask and ye shall
recieve.....if you have
not asked have you

Prayed?



Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

Jesus here gives two ways we are to pray; the first is “thy kingdom come.” “The kingdom of God is that moral and spiritual kingdom which the God of grace is setting up in this fallen world, whose subjects consist of as many as have been brought into hearty subjection to His gracious scepter, and of which His Son Jesus is the glorious Head.”^{vii}

We are to pray for His kingdom to come but we also need to live like we are members of that kingdom already.

The second part of this verse, sometimes referred to as the third petition, is rendered in Luke, “as in heaven, so upon earth” (Luke 11:2).

This works with the last one, for if His will is not being done we are hindering the coming of His kingdom.

Thy will be done - The will of God is, that people should obey his law, and be holy. The word “will,” here, has reference to his law, and to what would be “acceptable” to him. To pray, then, that his will may be done, on earth as in heaven, is to pray that his “law,” his “revealed will,” may be obeyed and loved. His law is perfectly obeyed in heaven, and his true children most ardently desire and pray that it may also be obeyed on the earth.

Our Daily Bread

Give us this day our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)

This petition is for our needs. Give us this day our daily bread. Meet our physical spiritual and emotional needs. God is our Heavenly Father and just as an earthly daddy tries to meet the needs of his kids how much more will our Heavenly Daddy. Jesus put it this way:

Matthew 7:9-11 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? (10) Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? (11) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

God is concerned about our daily needs and knows what we need even before we ask and He wants to give us the good things, but just like an earthly daddy, he wants to be asked. He wants His children to be thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He delights in meeting our needs.

I recall a time earlier in my Christian walk when I needed transportation. So I decided to ask my Heavenly Dad for a car, and not just any car but a Vette. I was as specific as I could be. I wanted it powder blue, 5 speed, and AM-FM cassette stereo and air condoned. A few weeks later my Dad called and said he found a car for me. It was powder blue, 5-speed, AM-FM cassette, and air conditioned Chevy

Chevette diesel. Even as a new Christian I saw God's humor in meeting my needs and not what I wanted. The car cost \$425 and I drove it for five years. God went pass what I wanted and gave me what I needed.

Forgive Us

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matthew 6:12)

This is a big topic and a stumbling block for many. There is the thought that I will forgive them as soon as they apologize, but we do not see that. Many times we see the thought of being forgiven being only as we forgive others:

- For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)
- And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:25-26)
- Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: (Luke 6:37)

You get the idea. We must be willing to forgive. We cannot make excuse but just do it and do it like God does it.

There is a misnomer that God “forgives and forgets.” We can never forget what that person did to us. But that is not a true statement. What the Bible actually says is “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 10:17) Choosing not to remember is quite different than forgetting.

Choosing not to remember is an act of the will. There is another thought that in forgiving we say the act never happened. That is not true either. These two thoughts tie together in this. When Jesus died on the cross, He did not say we never sinned but our sins were forgiven and blotted out. He paid the price for our offence. It is not fair but the offended, innocent party absorbs the cost of the offence.

In the same way when I forgive, I take on the cost of the offence. For example, somebody steals my credit card and runs up a ten thousand dollar bill. I forgive them but the credit card money wants the bill paid or somebody in jail, so I pay the bill. I absorb the cost of the offence. Do I give them another credit card? No, that becomes enabling, encouraging the sinful habit.

It may not be a physical cost, it may be emotional or spiritual but it is the offended party that is doing the forgiving that absorbs the cost. There is no way around it. We must forgive completely and unconditionally. That means you do not bring it up to God, you do not bring it up to the other person, and you do not bring it up to yourself.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-22)

This does not mean we keep a log book and when that man forgets to put the seat back down one too many times you can say, “OK that is number 491 and I do not have to forgive him anymore!” This is speaking to how completely we are to forgive. It speaks to the universality of forgiveness. No matter how many times we are offended we are to forgive just as many times as we offend Jesus by our sins He forgives. Would we like Jesus to keep count and stop at 491? Of course not, He was responding to Peter who asked if we should forgive seven times when the law only required three. Peter probably thought he was being generous but Jesus just told Peter and us that forgiveness knows no bounds.

This does not mean we go up to the offending person and in a grandiose manner say, “I forgive you” when no apology was offered. This act of forgiving is vertical, between you and God. This does make it easier for the next step, if it happens.

What are we to do when the person who hurt us comes to us seeking pardon for their offence (and that is what forgiving is doing)? Since we have already forgiven them in the eyes of God, it makes it a lot easier to forgive them directly Just as Jesus tells us to: Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and

seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. (Luke 17:3-4)

Please note we are not to be continually rebuking them. Tell them once, forgive them and leave it in God's hands.

One closing thought on this topic: So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matthew 18:35)

In this parable a man forgive a huge debt would not forgive his fellow servant a very small debt, the condemnation is daunting. It is "My heavenly Father," not your Father if you do not forgive from the heart. That is, not merely in words, but really and truly to feel and act toward him as if he had not offended us. Then we have it, and we are forgiving others like God forgave us.

Pray For Spiritual Victory

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:13)

The root word for temptation means to test by piercing through (peran per'-an apparently the accusative case of an obsolete derivation of πείρω peirō to pierce through)^{viii}.

Not that we will not be tempted, that is a part of the Christian life and part of our growth but that the

temptation will not have any power over us, lead us to sin that could destroy us. God keep us from that.

And deliver us from evil: every evil thought and influence around us as well as that old evil one, satan^{ix}, the devil whose mission is to steal, kill, and destroy. Destroy our testimony, steal our joy, and kill us if he can. We need God's supernatural protection against such a foe.

I remember such a time in my life where a person laid hands on me suddenly and without permission. I normally would not have allowed this person to lay hands on me for prayer as he had a religious spirit (or spirits) on him. One of those religious spirits jumped on me (not in me, the Holy Spirit dwells in me so the demon could not enter). This is one reason why we are to lay hands suddenly on no man (see I Timothy 5:22).

With this spirit came confusion and an inability to pray to God. I got together with a good friend of mine who was spiritual and we prayed separately for a few hours and then came together. As he prayed against this spirit it felt like a mask was being ripped off my head. I was free and able to pray clearly to my Dear Heavenly Father.

With the ending doxology, we end as we began: praising God, after all he is the only one worthy to be praised.

We can see from this prayer this is a template for us to follow not a pattern we are to repeat. Through the adoration, confession, the supplication, and more adoration we are fulfilling the definition of prayer: heading towards God and making a wish.

Appendixes

About The Author

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.-Ephesians 2:8-9

I was born in Elizabeth, NJ in 1963. I was blessed with two wonderful parents who loved me. I graduated High School in 1981 and went on to college. I graduated with AA in Business and went to work.

I got a new car, friends to hang out with at the clubs, and a job at a major insurance company. Life was good. Then I got a part time job at Sears some 25 miles from where I lived. I did not know why I wanted a part time job or why I would take one so far from home. But God did.

Wheeling and Dealing with God

While I was working, I met a nice young lady. The more we talked, the more I liked her. But she was a summer worker and was leaving soon. So I screwed up all the courage I could muster and asked her out on a date. She asked me if I wanted to go to a revival meeting. "A what?" I asked. "A revival meeting, there will be singing and preaching".

Well, I tried to make an excuse that I did not have time to change. She told me I was dressed fine.

Well, I liked this girl so I said yes. I wish I could say I got saved, but I didn't. I heard some good singing and for the first time in my life I heard the Bible Preached.

I was intrigued. I kept coming back even after she left as I wanted to learn more. A few months later I figured I needed to be baptized so I could join the church. I was and I did, but I missed the point completely. Then I started dealing with God. I needed two jobs so I could pay off my car faster, so starting in January 1990 I will quit my part time job so I could do things like soul winning visitation and I will start tithing then (I am certain He was most impressed and profoundly grateful;).

The Tables Turn

I kept my word. I tithed for the first time 12/31/89. The next Thursday I showed up for visitation. I went out with the bus ministry director. He attempted to lead a lady to Christ. About the third time through, God allowed me to understand I needed His Salvation through His Son.

I was petrified. Old ugly started whispering in my ear: "You can't tell them now. You have already been baptized. They won't accept you at Church. I did not say anything. I was scared. What would happen if I died?"

By God's Grace, I made it to Saturday. I went on bus visitation, but I had no joy. I could not wait to get back. As soon as we did, I went in to see that bus director. I did not care any more about acceptance or appearance, I needed to be saved! At 12:30 PM on

1/6/90 there was a new name written down in Glory, and it was mine!

So, my dear reader, what are you trusting in to get to heaven? If it is not salvation by grace alone by Christ alone, why don't you stop now and accept Christ as your Saviour?

I became involved in my church. Bus Captain, Sunday school teacher, working in Children's Church. Children were being saved weekly. I could have stayed there forever, but God had a different plan.

Move over Jonah, I coming through!

I was called to preach. It was in 1995. I wasn't sure what to do. I prayed about it and decided I should go to school, but where? When it came about, it could not have been any clearer if Gabriel himself came and told me.

I was at the National Sword of the Lord conference. There were many fine schools there, but I felt a definite leading to go to Temple School of the Bible in Tenn. I gave notice, had money in the bank and a job lead. That is when Old Ugly popped in again.

What happened is I got a job offer in Jacksonville, FL with a place to stay until I got my own. Oh, yeah, by the way, they also have a school there and (so everybody told me) was better. I went to Jacksonville against the leading of the Holy Spirit. Look out Jonah, here I come!

It took me a while to figure out how badly I messed up. My job did not allow me time to attend college, so that went by the wayside. My health began

to decline: Arthritis, asthma, diabetes. I starting thinking God was trying to get my attention. But then the doctor had me placed in the hospital for TIA (like mini-strokes). I was in the hospital for the better part of three days. That is when I realized God was whipping (read: Chastising) me for running. When I got out, I rededicated my life to my calling and I am currently in counseling with my Pastor to see what we will do next.

I did not write this to imply all sick people are that way because thy sinned. That was true in my case. I write this for those who are discouraged over their current situation in life. Don't despair. God can and will still use you if you turn to Him. Remember:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. (Philippians 3:13-15)

Other titles by Thomas Donelan:

- Filling the Empty Life: A Study in Ecclesiastes.
- Twenty One Days to Your Breakthrough.

Both of these titles are available through Amazon ([amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) or the author's website Unto the Hills Ministries (untothehills.net) where you can read my blog, listen to sermons, and download free resources like tracts and Bible studies.

Endnotes

ⁱ Amazon.com search;

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=prayer, September 3, 2013

ⁱⁱ Amazon.com search;

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=sr_nr_n_0?rh=n%3A283155%2Cn%3A12470W%2Ck%3Aprayer&keywords=prayer&ie=UTF8&qid=1378255790&rnid=1000, September 3, 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ Strongs Concordance of Greek and Hebrew Words, E-Sword electronic edition, reference number G4314

^{iv} Strongs Concordance of Greek and Hebrew Words, E-Sword electronic edition, reference number G2172

^v Barnes, Albert; Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1847-1885, Public Domain, E-Sword electronic edition.

^{vi} Johnson, B.W, The People's New Testament, 1889, Public Domain, E-Sword electronic edition.

^{vii} Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary, 1871, Public Domain, E-Sword Electronic Edition.

^{viii} Strongs Concordance of Greek and Hebrew Words, E-Sword electronic edition, reference number G4008.

^{ix} I refuse to give the devil any honor or glory even if it means violating the rules of grammar. I internally did not capitalize his name.



PRAYER, THE VERY THOUGHT OF IT BRINGS THOUGHTS OF ROBED PRIEST, BEADS, AND TIME ON YOUR KNEES DOING PENANCE, BUT IS THAT REALLY PRAYER?

FOCUSING ON THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS, IN LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY, THOMAS DONELAN TAKES YOU VERSE BY VERSE THROUGH THE MODEL PRAYER OF JESUS IN MATTHEW CHAPTER SIX TO HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT PRAYER IS, AND WHAT IT IS NOT, HOW WE CAN ALWAYS PRAY AND NOT FAINT, AND IF YOU HAVE NOT ASKED ANYTHING, HAVE YOU REALLY PRAYED? ALL THESE QUESTIONS AND MORE ARE ANSWERED IN THIS BOOKLET.

THOMAS DONELAN IS A BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN WHO HAS BEEN A PASTOR, AND IS CURRENTLY TEACHING THE BIBLE, SOMETHING HE HAS BEEN DOING FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS AND IT IS THE PASSION OF HIS LIFE AND HIS GREATEST PRAYER IS THAT EACH CHRISTIAN GETS A PASSION FOR THE BIBLE.



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