

ESSENTIALS_{OF} PRAYER

E. M. BOUNDS

**ESSENTIALS_{OF}
PRAYER**



WHITAKER
HOUSE

Publisher's note:

This new edition from Whitaker House has been edited for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been updated for clarity and readability.

All Scriptures are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

Essentials of Prayer

ISBN: 978-1-64123-144-2

eBook ISBN: 978-1-60374-655-7

Printed in the United States of America

© 1994 by Whitaker House

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

LCCN: 2001004319

No part of this book may be recorded or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher. Please direct all inquiries to permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com.

CONTENTS

1. Prayer and the Entire Man.....	7
2. Prayer and Humility	17
3. Prayer and Devotion	25
4. Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving	33
5. Prayer and Trouble.....	43
6. Prayer and Trouble (Continued)	57
7. Prayer and God's Work	65
8. Prayer and Consecration	77
9. Prayer and Definite Standards	89
10. Prayer Born of Compassion	97
11. Concerted Prayer.....	107
12. The Universality of Prayer.....	117
13. Prayer and Missions	125
About the Author.....	139

PRAYER AND THE ENTIRE MAN

Henry Clay Trumbull spoke forth the Infinite in terms of our world, and the Eternal in the forms of our human life. Some years ago, on a ferry boat, I met a gentleman who knew him, and I told him that when I had last seen Dr. Trumbull, a fortnight before, he had spoken of him. "Oh, yes," said my friend, "he was a great Christian, so real, so intense. He was at my home years ago and we were talking about prayer. 'Why, Trumbull,' I said, 'you don't mean to say if you lost a pencil you would pray about it, and ask God to help you find it.' 'Of course I would; of course I would,' was his instant and excited reply." Of course he would. Was not his faith a real thing? Like the Savior, he put his doctrine strongly by taking an extreme illustration to embody his principle, but the principle was fundamental. He did trust God in

everything. And the Father honored the trust of his child.

—Robert E. Speer

Prayer has to do with the entire man. Prayer takes the man in his whole being—mind, soul, and body. It takes the whole man to pray, and prayer affects the entire man in its gracious results. As the whole nature of man enters into prayer, so also all that belongs to man is the beneficiary of prayer. All of man receives benefits from prayer. The whole man must be given to God when praying.

The largest results from praying come to him who gives himself—all of himself, all that belongs to himself—to God. This is the secret of full consecration (a condition of successful praying) and the sort of praying that brings the largest fruits.

The men of olden times who were very successful in prayer, who brought the largest things to pass, who moved God to do great things, were those who were entirely given over to God in their praying. God wants, and must have, all that there is in man when answering his prayers. He must have wholehearted men through whom He can work out His purposes and plans concerning men. God must have men in their entirety. No double-minded man need apply. No vacillating man can be used. No man with a divided allegiance to God, the world, and himself, can do the praying that is needed.

Holiness is wholeness, and so God wants holy men, men who are wholehearted and true, for His service and for the work of praying.

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray
God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved
blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

These are the sort of men God wants for leaders of the hosts of Israel, and these are the kind out of which the praying class is formed.

Man is a trinity in one, and yet man is neither a trinity nor a dual creature when he prays, but a unit. Man is one in all the essentials and acts and attitudes of piety. Soul, spirit, and body are to unite in all things pertaining to life and godliness.

The body, first of all, engages in prayer, since it assumes the praying attitude in prayer. Prostration of the body becomes us in praying as well as prostration of the soul. The attitude of the body counts much in prayer, although it is true that the heart may be haughty and lifted up, and the mind listless and wandering, and the praying a mere form, even while the knees are bent in prayer.

Daniel knelt upon his knees three times a day in prayer. Solomon knelt in prayer at the dedication of the temple. Our Lord prostrated Himself in Gethsemane in that memorable season of praying just before His betrayal. Where there is earnest and faithful praying, the body always takes on the form most suited to the state of the soul at the time. In that way the body joins the soul in praying.

The entire man must pray. The whole man—life, heart, temper, mind—is in it. Each and all join in the prayer exercise. Doubt, double-mindedness, and division of the affections are all

foreign to the prayer closet. Character and conduct, undefiled, made whiter than snow, are mighty potencies and are the most seemly beauties for the closet hour and for the struggles of prayer.

A loyal intellect must conspire and add the energy and fire of its undoubting and undivided faith to that kind of hour, the hour of prayer. Necessarily the mind enters into the praying. First of all, it takes thought to pray. The intellect teaches us that we ought to pray. By serious thinking beforehand, the mind prepares itself for approaching the throne of grace. Thought goes before entrance into the prayer closet and prepares the way for true praying. It considers what will be asked for in the closet hour.

True praying does not leave to the inspiration of the hour what will be the requests of that hour. Praying is asking for something definite from God; therefore, the thought arises beforehand: "What shall I ask for at this hour?" All vain and evil and frivolous thoughts are eliminated, and the mind is given over entirely to God, thinking of Him, of what is needed, and of what has been received in the past.

By every token, prayer, in taking hold of the entire man, does not leave out the mind. The very first step in prayer is a mental one. The disciples took that first step when they said to Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1). We must be taught through the intellect, and only as far as the intellect is given up to God in prayer will we be able to learn well and readily the lesson of prayer.

Paul knew that the nature of prayer is spread over the whole man. It must be so. It takes the whole man to embrace, in prayer's

Godlike sympathies, the entire race of man—the sorrows, the sins, and the death of Adam's fallen race. It takes the whole man to run parallel with God's high and sublime will in saving mankind. It takes the whole man to stand with our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and sinful man. This is the doctrine Paul taught in his prayer directory in 1 Timothy 2.

Nowhere does it appear so clearly that it requires the entire man, in all departments of his being, to pray than in this teaching of Paul. It takes the whole man to pray, until all the storms that agitate his soul are calmed to a great calm, until the stormy winds and waves cease as by a Godlike spell. It takes the whole man to pray, until cruel tyrants and unjust rulers are changed in their natures and lives, as well as in their governing qualities, or until they cease to rule. It requires the entire man in praying, until high and proud and unspiritual ecclesiastics become gentle, lowly, and religious, until godliness and gravity bear rule in church and in state, in home and in business, in public as well as in private life.

It is man's business to pray, and it takes manly men to do it. It is a godly business to pray, and it takes godly men to do it. And it is godly men who give over themselves entirely to prayer. Prayer is far-reaching in its influence and in its gracious effects. It is an intense and profound business that deals with God and His plans and purposes, and it takes wholehearted men to do it. No halfhearted, half-brained, half-spirited effort will do for this serious, all-important, heavenly business. The whole heart, the whole brain, and the whole spirit must be engaged in the matter of praying, which is to affect so mightily the characters and destinies of men.

The answer of Jesus to the scribe as to what was the first and greatest commandment was as follows: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind*" (Matthew 22:37). In other words, the entire man must love God without reservation. So it takes the same entire man to do the praying that God requires of men. All the powers of man must be engaged in it. God cannot tolerate a divided heart in the love He requires of men, neither can He bear with a divided man in praying.

The psalmist taught this very truth: "*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart*" (Psalm 119:2). It takes wholehearted men to keep God's commandments, and the same sort of men to seek God. These are they who are counted "blessed." Upon these wholehearted ones rests God's approval.

Bringing the case closer home to himself, the psalmist made this declaration as to his own personal practice: "*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments*" (Psalm 119:10). And, further on, giving us his prayer for a wise and understanding heart, he told us his purposes concerning the keeping of God's law: "*Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart*" (v. 34).

Just as it requires a whole heart given to God to gladly and fully obey God's commandments, so it takes a whole heart to do effectual praying. Because it requires the whole man to pray, praying is no easy task. Praying is far more than simply bending the knee and saying a few words by rote.

'Tis not enough to bend the knee,
 And words of prayer to say;
 The heart must with the lips agree,
 Or else we do not pray.

Praying is no light and trifling exercise. While children should be taught early to pray, praying is no child's task. Prayer draws upon the whole nature of man. Prayer engages all the powers of man's moral and spiritual nature. It is this that explains somewhat the praying of our Lord as described in Hebrews:

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.
 (Hebrews 5:7)

It takes only a moment's thought to see how such praying of our Lord drew mightily upon all the powers of His being and called into exercise every part of His nature. This is the praying that brings the soul close to God and that brings God down to earth.

Body, soul, and spirit are taxed and brought under tribute to prayer. David Brainerd made this record of his praying: "God enabled me to agonize in prayer until I was wet with perspiration, though in the shade and in a cool place."

The Son of God in Gethsemane was in an agony of prayer, the intensity of which engaged His whole being:

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from

them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:40–44)

Here was praying that laid its hands on every part of our Lord's nature, that called forth all the powers of His soul, His mind, and His body. This was praying that took in the entire man.

Paul was acquainted with this kind of praying. In writing to the Roman Christians, he urged them to pray with him after this fashion: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me*" (Romans 15:30).

The words "*strive together with me*" tell of Paul's praying and how much he put into it. It is not a docile request, not a little thing, this sort of praying, this "striving with me." It has the nature of a great battle, a conflict to win, a great battle to be fought. As the soldier, the praying Christian fights a life-and-death struggle. His honor, his immortality, and eternal life are all in it. This is praying as the athlete struggles for mastery and for the crown, as he wrestles or runs a race. Everything depends on the strength he puts in it. Energy, ardor, swiftness, every power of his nature is in it. Every power is quickened and strained to its very utmost. Littleness, halfheartedness, weakness, and laziness are all absent.

Just as it takes the whole man to pray successfully, so in turn the whole man receives the benefits of such praying. As every part of man's complex being enters into true praying, so every part of that same nature receives blessings from God in answer to such praying. This kind of praying engages our undivided hearts, our whole desires, and our full consent to be the Lord's.

God sees to it that when the whole man prays, in turn the whole man will be blessed. His body takes in the good of praying, for much praying is done specifically for the body. Food and raiment, health and bodily vigor come in answer to praying. Clear mental action, right thinking, an enlightened understanding, and safe reasoning powers come from praying. Divine guidance means God so moving and impressing the mind, that we will make wise and safe decisions. "*The meek will he guide in judgment*" (Psalm 25:9).

Many a praying preacher has been greatly helped just at this point. The unction of the Holy One that comes upon the preacher invigorates the mind, loosens up thought, and gives utterance. This is the explanation of former days, when men of very limited education had such wonderful liberty of the Spirit in praying and in preaching. Their thoughts flowed as a stream of water. Their entire intellectual machinery felt the impulse of the divine Spirit's gracious influences.

And, of course, the soul receives large benefits in this sort of praying. Thousands can testify to this statement. So we repeat, that as the entire man comes into play in true, earnest, effectual praying, so the entire man—soul, mind, and body—receives the benefits of prayer.