

# Effective Prayer

Joe Slater

Both in example and in word, Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Some of His parables deal specifically with prayer, teaching us some of the qualities we must have in order to pray effectively.

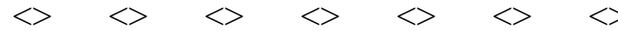
Our Lord told the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) specifically to make the point “*that men ought always to pray and not lose heart*” (v. 1). In the parable, an unjust judge finally vindicated a poor widow, not because it was right, but because he was weary of her pleadings. If an unjust judge would help someone about whom he cared nothing, simply because she kept asking, how much more will our loving, righteous Heavenly Father help those “*who cry out day and night to Him*” (v. 7)? When we become discouraged because it seems that God doesn’t hear our prayers, we ought to remember this parable and keep praying. Though we may not understand why God doesn’t answer our prayers right away, we must trust Him. In prayer, as in many other activities, persistence pays!

At the end of that same parable, Jesus asked a perplexing question: “*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*” (18:18). This points out a second quality needed in prayer. It takes faith to pray acceptably (James 1:6); and it takes even stronger faith to persevere in prayer. Jesus seems to be saying that faith may become a rare commodity on earth before His return. May it not be so with us! Let us cultivate a stronger faith so that we do not grow weary in prayer.

After the parable of the persistent widow, Jesus spoke the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). Here we find a third quality necessary for prayer: humility. The proud Pharisee boasted about

his personal goodness to God, while the tax collector humbly begged for mercy. So arrogant was the Pharisee that Jesus said he “*prayed thus with himself*” (v. 11). His prayer went no higher than the ceiling! On the other hand, the lowly tax collector “*went down to his house justified*” (v. 14).

Persistence, Faith, and Humility – while these are not the only qualities we need to have in order to pray effectively, they certainly are crucial ones. Keep on praying; keep trusting God to answer according to His will; and humble yourself before Him so that he may lift you up.



## Don’t Give Up!

Babe Ruth struck out 1,333 times; but we remember him for his 714 home runs. Cy Young, one of the greatest pitchers, won 511 games; but few know he also lost more games than any other Major League pitcher (316).

Abraham Lincoln was badly beaten when he ran for the legislature. He then failed in business and spent seventeen years paying off the debt. He failed in an effort to get an appointment to the U.S. Land Office. He was defeated in his race for the Senate, and again in his effort to be elected Vice-President. He had one setback after another, but eventually became President of the United States. He was not a quitter. He had “stickability.”

Many Christians “*believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away*” (Luke 8:13). Like Israel, we have a tendency to forget God (Jeremiah 2:32). In most communities, there are those who once were faithful, but are not now. Maybe they do not attend classes, evening services, or other meetings as they once did. They have ceased to participate in the work of the local church. Their light has gone out (Matthew 5:14-16). They have virtually quit. But a winner never quits, and a quitter never wins.

Let’s be doers – not quitters!

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. (adapted); via *House-to-House*

## Hardening of the Oughteries

Hardening of the arteries occurs when cholesterol, fat, etc. build up in your blood vessels. It can cause heart problems and even death. Prevention usually involves diet, exercise, and sometimes medicine. Corrective surgery may be needed.

A far greater problem is hardening of the ought-eries. You have this spiritual condition when you are not doing what the Bible teaches you ought. It can lead to bigger problems and even spiritual death! Do you have it? Let’s perform a quick test to find out:

Luke 18:1 “that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” (Do you know you ought to pray, but don’t?)

John 13:14 “You also ought to wash one another’s feet.” (Have you said, “I ought to help him/her,” but didn’t?)

Acts 5:29 “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Do you know you ought to do right, but then fail to do it?)

Romans 15:1 “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak.” (Have you thought, “I ought to encourage that weaker Christian,” but then you didn’t?)

2 Corinthians 2:7 “so that . . . you ought rather to forgive and comfort him.” (Do you know you ought to forgive, yet you haven’t?)

Hebrews 5:12 “For though by this time you ought to be teachers . . .” (How often have you thought, “I ought to be teaching others,” but you still aren’t?)

1 John 2:6 “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (Have you said, “I ought to clean up my walk with God,” but stayed in the mud?)

If you answered “yes” to any of these, you may be suffering from hardening of the oughteries. But there’s good news! With the right diet (God’s word) and exercise in godliness, you can clear out those oughteries. And spiritual surgery & medication is available to cure it all – the blood of Jesus Christ.

Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY) [edited for length]