God do you even hear me?

The ministry of prayer and meditation

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This message covers

- Part 1: Why doesn't God hear us?
- Part 2: What does God really want us to pray for most (what he cares about most)?
- Part 3: Meditation. God replies.

Information notice board

- 1) About me. Before I became a devoted Christian, I spent 20 years of my life being a hedonist one who seeks pleasure for the sake of it, Since God humbled me to turn me into his servant and I got baptized in May 2017, he has brought me near his courts and allowed me to praise him to pray to him effectively. You can read my full testimony <u>here</u>:
- 2) About these series. The Lord Jesus gave me a single word "Go" as I was praying for a word for this season and series. This word will define a series of 12 topics he has also given me to tell his church in order to fulfil the "Great Commission". This lesson is one of those messages.

....(Information notice board continued at the end).

Part 1: Why doesn't God hear us?

You and I have many needs, some of them massive, so we are always praying to God, whether the prayers are long or short, whether someone else is praying for us or ourselves. Infact, the Top 9 prayer requests per belief net are forⁱ:

- 1. Guidance and wisdom.
- 2. Love, peace and happiness
- 3. Finances, jobs and exams
- 4. Personal health
- 5. Salvation of others
- 6. Family issues divorce and meeting spouse
- 7. Protection of children
- 8. The Hungry and poor
- 9. Grief (on loss of someone).

The first problem:

It often seems like "hit and miss" with God. Does he even hear us? When good things happen, how do we know it's him and not just "karma"? So, we ask ourselves, God are you there? Do you even hear me?

The problem is this, we might be right - God might indeed not be hearing us - BUT not because he is not there or doesn't want to hear us. It is because we have not followed the first rule of God before you pray. You must do some housekeeping - otherwise you are wasting your time praying.

I will repeat, there are some important things God wants you to know about, before you start praying, otherwise, he won't hear you and you will say, "God do you hear me?" and he will not reply!



Mature

A: Housekeeping – getting rid of some things.

The housekeeping you need to do - to get rid of some stuff or to repair some stuff includes these three things:

#1. Stop focussing on ritual – instead stop doing wrong.

Many of us, focus on pomp and ritual in our religious ceremonies instead of getting rid of injustice, of evil deeds.

When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations— I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong.

Isaiah 1: 12 – 13, 15-16 (NIV).

#2. Stop using idle words – instead get rid of unforgiveness

Then we pray using idle and repetitive words (like pagans), instead of keeping your prayers meaningful, instead of forgiving others:

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This, then, is how you should pray

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6: 5 7-9, 14-15 (NIV).

#3. Get rid of pride and arrogance

And when you pray, have some humility – stop being arrogant:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers— or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Luke 18: 9 – 14 (NIV).

The second problem...

So, you can humbly tick that you have done all three – gotten rid of injustice and evil, forgiven who needs forgiving and been humble - not self-righteous, well God alone be praised! BUT still you have a problem...God doesn't hear you!

Well, take heart. So, when digging in a garden for the first time, you do two things:

- first you clear the land of thorns and thistles
- then you prepare the ground, you plough it.

So now the second step after removing the bad stuff is to prepare the ground. Two things I see are needed.

B: Preparation

#1. Have a hunger/steadfast search for God

Many of us are not desperate when we pray, our prayers are half hearted, do we really need God?

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV).

#2. Have a persistent attitude

Too many of us pray just once and give up. We think we are in a summer camp instead of seeing that winter is here and the battle is long and hard.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1(NIV)

Take a step of faith (my testimony)

3 years ago, I didn't know how to pray. I turned to the Lord my God and cried to him to teach me to pray! I heard his voice, it was one word "Psalms". In obedience, I have since learnt how to pray and I shared some of the initial tips in <u>my first message on prayer</u> that message was prayer 101 so to speak. This is now prayer 201 and what has God taught me since then?

- 1. **Keep a written record**. How can you receive if you don't believe? (James 1:5-8). I record my prayers, expecting to hear from God and he responds in faith, for without faith, you can't please God (Heb 11:6).
- 2. **Revisit your record** regularly to confirm if he has answered. I regularly check my spiritual journal, that is how I for example once saw God had answered 65+ of my prayers over 3 years!
- 3. Join prayer groups to hear how others pray (For example I am part of my church, *Lighthouse* prayer group).
- 4. Listen to sermons to get you in the Spirit or the "spiritual mood" if you like.
- 5. **Read bible passages and pray over them** when you read (My wife and I do this, for example taking a promise or verse we read in scripture and making it our prayer).

Conclusion of part 1

So, God doesn't hear many of us because many of us are full of blood (injustice), are unforgiving and are proud.

However, for others of us God doesn't hear us simply because we don't really seek him with all our heart and we are not persistent enough, we give up too quick – forgetting it is a battle zone – it is not a walk in the park with cherry blossoms and lilies and birds singing – this is a battle for your soul until liberation day comes!

Now that we understand the basics, what kind of prayers do we need to pray, so he can really hear us – and answer?

Part 2: What does God really want us to pray for most (what he cares about most)?

If you want to know what someone cares about the most, listen to what they speak about the most. Jesus himself in Luke 6: 45 said, *"out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks"*. Another version says: A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. <u>What you say flows from what is in your heart</u>. (Luke 6: 45 NLT).

The secret to knowing the things God cares about the most, the things that are on his heart, is to hear or to listen to what Jesus talked about the most! Why is this a revelation? Because the bible says Jesus (the son) *"radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God." (Hebrews 1:3 NLT)* and in another place, Jesus himself said: *For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. (John 12: 49 NIV).*

The revelation put another way is this: If you understand what Jesus spoke about, you will know the things that were and are most important to God. If you want God to hear your prayers, let his concerns become your concerns – and then let those concerns become your prayers to God. If you do this, see if he won't open the floodgates of heaven (See *Mal 3: 10*) and quickly put his hand on your enemies' neck (see *Psalms 81:14*)!

The problem: Jesus said so many things, the whole bible so to speak is his words, so how do you know the things he cared the most about, doesn't that mean reading the whole bible? Yes and No. Correct that the bible is his word and reading it all will help you discern – as he helped me. I have read the bible cover to cover at least 4 times. If you haven't aim to do so, but for now, thankfully, with modern technology, we can categorise the subjects Jesus spoke about in the 4 gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and assess the things Jesus spoke about. Lucky for me, someone has done the hard work for me and categorised the top things Jesus spoke about, including the number of times he did.

The Top 14 things Jesus spoke about (with number of occurrences):ⁱⁱ

The top 14 things Jesus spoke about are in the table below.

- Surprise surprise, God is most concerned about his own glory, his name and his home!
- Surprise surprise, God doesn't want anyone to go to Hell so he speaks about it a lot!
- Surprise surprise, God wants us to make disciples of others, so he tells us to be concerned about this.

How does this compare to the Top 10 prayer requests of Christians according to Belief net covered in Part 1?

Here is that list again, compared with God's list:

14 things Jesus spoke about most		Top 9 prayer requests of Christians	
1.	God - including God (166), Father (61), Son	, 1.	Guidance and wisdom (wisdom is the
	(117), Holy Spirit (32) (All 376)		principal thing).
2.	Heaven (273)	2 .	Love, peace and happiness
3.	Hell (172)	3 .	Finances, jobs and exams
4.	Making disciples (140)	4.	Personal health
5.	Prayer (116)	5 .	Salvation of others
6.	Faith (104)	6.	Family issues - divorce and meet spouse
7.	Love/compassion (65)	7.	Protect children
8.	Deeds/works (61)	▶ 8.	Hungry and poor
9.	Hearing (59)	9.	Grieving
10.	Second coming (51)		
11.	His name (45)		
12.	Satan (41)		
13.	Hearts (41)		
14.	Wealth, money (37)		

You will probably ask, doesn't God care when we are grieving for example? That others are Hungry and Poor? Doesn't he care that we need wisdom? How about world Peace? It's not even in his Top 14!

Sure, God cares about these things, but he explains the most important thing, the **priority**:

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, <u>and all these things</u> will be added to you. Matthew 6: 33 (ESV).

Care about the things God cares about and faithfully prioritise them as He wants – pray for the glory of his name, pray for salvation of others – so that they don't go to hell, pray to have more faith.

While you do, he will then grant you the desires of your heart: healing from pain, helping you meet your spouse, providing the finances for your needs and even helping you have enough to feed the poor and hungry.

But let's also be honest with ourselves, some of our prayers are just selfish. Yes, many of our prayers for money are just selfish. We pray for money so we can show our haters that we are blessed! We pray for money so we can boast – look at what I have built, I am great and powerful, bow down to my mighty brain.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4: 3 (NIV).

Part 2b: What to pray for (now that we have God's heart)

Having understood God's heart, it becomes easy to pray, knowing fully well that our prayers are in accordance with his will. You can get God answer you immediately, just like Elijah, a prayer warrior. The bible says this about this man:

Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! James 5: 17 (NLT)

What did Elijah do in his prayers that made him stand out as a prayer warrior? How did Elijah pray?

Then Elijah called to the people, "Come over here!" They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down. He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, and he used the stones to rebuild the altar in the name of the LORD. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood

Then he said, "Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood."

After they had done this, he said, "Do the same thing again!" And when they were finished, he said, "Now do it a third time!" So they did as he said, and the water ran around the altar and even filled the trench.

At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. ³⁷ O LORD, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself."

Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench! And when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, "The LORD—he is God! Yes, the LORD is God!" 1 Kings 18: 30 – 38 (NLT).

In the passage above, we see what Elijah did:

- First, he got 12 stones and repaired the altar (removing the things that needed to be removed as we saw in part 1)
- Next, he dug a trench, piled wood, cut a bull into pieces and poured water again and again and again (preparing as he should, in humility and persistence, as we saw in part 1).
- Third, he waited for the proper time. He prayed at the "usual time for the evening sacrifice". There is routine, there is protocol here perhaps like having a daily devotional hour.
- Then he prayed and in his prayer, he confirmed he did all God told him to do (showing he had understood God's heart and purpose as we saw in part 2).
- Once he prayed, God answered immediately! A miracle took place.

So now, we have the pattern of how the prayer warrior did it. We can therefore pray all sorts of prayers, but in line with God's heart! Here is that list of God's concerns, a second time, but this time with examples of prayers in line with God's heart, Jesus' concerns.

Jesus' concern	Example prayers	
1. God - including God (166), Father (61), Son (117), Holy Spirit (32) ((376)	 For God's glory to fill the earth – in our personal lives, friends and neighbours. To learn how to praise God. For God to be feared – with Holy fear. For us to understand the love of the father, the grace of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit For there to be correct teaching about the Trinity. Prayers of praise <u>about who God is</u>: <i>His love for you (Psalm 52:8)</i> <i>His goodness (Psalm 145:7)</i> <i>His holiness (Psalm 145:7)</i> <i>His word (Psalm 119)</i> <i>His creation (Psalm 119)</i> <i>His creation (Psalm 119)</i> <i>Prayers to thank God about</i>: <i>Your family relationships</i> <i>Your friendships</i> <i>The community you live in</i> <i>Your freedom</i> <i>Things that make you smile or laugh (Psalm 68:3)</i> <i>Forgiveness (Romans 7:25)</i> <i>Your trials (yes really—because they're strengthening and refining you James 1:2–4)</i> 	
2. Heaven (273)	 For the Kingdom of Heaven to come For our hearts to be focussed on heaven not on earth – where the treasure is, there the heart is also. To remain hopeful for the time to come. 	
3. Hell (172)	• For people to be saved so they don't go to hell	

Various (40+) example prayers – but with God's concerns in mindⁱⁱⁱ

4. Making disciples (140)	 For eyes to be opened that people may see the terror of hell For us to become bold/have courage so we can preach or talk about hell without being afraid of being labelled lunatics For specific people to get saved. For evangelists preaching the gospel For disciple training schools (including seminars, universities, home/cells) For ministries going out to make disciples – in hospitals, in prisons, in unreached places. For bibles to be produced
	 For bibles to be translated. For pastors, teachers and those assisting in the ministries. For Governments and leaders receptive to the Christian message.
5. Prayer (116)	 For God to teach us how to pray For God to give us a humble heart For God to help us forgive before we pray For God to give us a heart to love prayer For God to help us tarry, endure in prayer For God to help us be disciplined in prayer. Prayer for spiritual strength Prayer for wisdom
6. Faith (104)	 Lord increase our faith Lord help us see what you are doing with eyes of faith Lord enable us to spend more time reading your word that our faith may increase. Faith to pray for your craziest dreams.
7. Love/compassion (65)	 To help us love the unlovables – annoying people, our enemies. To care about the various causes and show compassion – racial equality, women in domestic violence, poor, sick, disabled, slaves, war zones, house helps in poor countries, those seeking justice, those in prison To learn to be humble To be good/loving – husbands, fathers, mothers, in laws, friends. To learn responsibility, leadership, administration and other relevant skills For those close and dear to us – spouses, children, family, friends, work colleagues, siblings, church
8. Deeds/works (61)	family, community, neighbours. As in 7 above
9. Hearing (59)	 A heart that listens To remove distractions which prevent us listening The discipline of listening and then implementing How to be obedient

 Second coming (51) His name (45) 	 A prayer against false teachers of the end times A prayer for the right teachers who are well grounded A removal of the spirit of fear A quickening of the work of the Spirit As in 1 above.
12. Satan (41)	 For his schemes to fail For us to put on the full armour of God against the enemy For his agents on this earth to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus For us to have the strength and the love for the unlovables – those who are evil under his influence For the anointing of the Lord to stand against his schemes For us to stand firm in the mind – where the battle is intense For us to overcome temptation
13. Hearts (41)	As in 9 above. Also
	 A pure heart An honest heart – to tell God what you are feeling
14. Wealth, money (37)	 Wisdom to be good stewards A heart that doesn't love money A generous heart to give away money A heart that is heavenbound rather than earth focussed The wisdom to increase wealth for the Kingdom dreams Neither too much nor too little – just enough For the strength to resist the celebrity culture of
	 For the strength to resist the celebrity culture of

Conclusion of part 2

So, now we have seen that the things we are praying for are not often in line with God's heart and that is a key reason he is not hearing us. If we however pray, learning from a prayer warrior like Elijah, then we can pray all sorts of prayers, 100s of prayers – but with God's heart, his purposes in mind. This can give us assurance that often times he will hear us and answer immediately – particularly when we need a miracle.

But sometimes – our prayers can't not be answered with a miracle, a one-time solution like for Elijah, they are often longer/deep seated issues – for example seeking a spouse, God doesn't miraculously drop an angel from heaven or put you in deep sleep and you wake up next to this man with an amazing body, so handsome, rich, not a womaniser and yet also so humble. For this, we have to listen to him answer us and it can come in bits and pieces – and this is where meditation comes in. I didn't think it was so important until God showed me how my own journey had been.

Part 3: The Ministry of Christian Meditation

If prayer is us talking to God, meditation is Him talking back to us.

The final piece of why we don't hear God is because we don't meditate - we don't slow down to hear him speak - with the still small voice. We pray and then rush off! We are frustrated and complaining: "God do you even hear me?" Before he can speak, we have dashed off to the next thing!

Yet, he is saying, Yes, I do hear you, but then he asks a question of his own: [Joel, John, Jess, Judith] do you even hear me?

Interestingly, this idea of what meditation is and why God wants me to cover it actually came while I was meditating on the message, over 6 months after God initially gave it to me! Which is like you slowly chewing on God's word – perhaps like a cow which chews the curd ... You swallow, and then it comes back to mull over.

You reflect on it in the night (meditation) and therefore are able to obey him during the day.

"I reflect at night on who you are, O Lord; therefore, I obey your instructions." Psalms 119:55 NLT

If you fill your heart with the word of God, which is with God, which is God, God starts speaking to you, showing you the path to take and the one to avoid.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither whatever they do prospers. Psalms 1: 1 – 3 (NIV).

We spend our days chasing the paper, chasing the spouse, chasing the latest health fad. But God, says, chase hard after me – start walking towards me, then stop. Stand to hear for my voice and then when you find me, sit at my feet – and when you do, you will prosper in everything, the things you seek:

- 1. Guidance and wisdom.
- 2. Love, peace and happiness.
- 3. Finances, jobs and exams.
- 4. Personal health.

The problem: The problem is many of us don't understand Christian meditation. We confuse it with what we hear from others – perhaps from Yoga, from Transdental meditation. We think meditation is a dirty word.

Correct that - Meditation is the act of focusing one's mental energies on a specific topic in an effort to achieve resolution or peace of mind. <u>But</u>, the bible is different on this focus:

Biblical meditation ^{iv}narrows that definition to <u>a spiritual exercise focused on Scripture</u>. In biblical meditation, a person deliberately quiets the heart and contemplates certain verses, asking, "What is this saying to me about my life and situation?" or "What is this saying about God?" Biblical meditation can include prayer, memorising scripture, and reading.

The first biblical example of meditation is found in Genesis 24:63, when Isaac went into the fields in the evening to meditate. While there, he saw his father's servant returning from Aram Naharaim with Rebekah, who was

soon to be Isaac's bride. The way the Bible records this event hints that meditation was part of Isaac's regular routine.

By comparison and as an example Transcendental meditation (or TM) ^vis a technique for achieving inner peace and spiritual renewal by focusing on a mantra repeated silently. As the mind "settles," the practitioner is able to "transcend" thought and enter a silent state of bliss and tranquillity. The similarities between the practice of transcendental meditation and the practice of religious prayer rituals cannot be denied. The basic posture for transcendental meditation is sitting for 15–20 minutes, with eyes closed, repeating a mantra or a simple sound to clear the mind of thought.

Nevertheless, the difference is that: In TM, you repeat a mantra so you can clear your mind, biblical meditation isn't about clearing your mind – it is about filling your mind with God's word.

Where you focus on the inner self, on your flesh in TM or other worldly meditation, in Christian meditation – you focus, not on yourself – but on God, who is the Spirit.

"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways." Psalm 77: 12.

My experience.

Often my daily devotional routine covers both prayer and meditation. I will get into the "spiritual mood" or to clear my mind by listening to Christian music. I am for example loving Bethel Music's "God of revival". Then I will often pray the things on my heart for the day and then I will get my prayer list -I keep this in an app called Echo.

That is prayer. I will then meditate on God's word. God taught me to try to memorise at least one scripture per day and I have verses I have kept, which I read and try to meditate on.

Finally, he has given me a "love schedule" – people to pray for. As part of this, I look at the name and think of them. Often God will then speak to me about this person and then I can for example send them a message with a prophetic word or a bible verse exhorting them.

During such times of meditation:

- 1. A one-year spiritual checklist was born
- 2. God gave me the idea to send personalised invitations to certain people.
- 3. God spoke to me and confirmed promises to me.

I actually realised that during meditation is when I get "holy ideas". Where do these ideas come from? Of course, it's God speaking, during those times when I meditate on him. Thank God for meditation!

Conclusion of the matter

God hears his saints when they pray in accordance with his will and then God speaks back to them that wait on him – waiting at his door posts for his word, meditating on his promises. For such, they will find rivers of living waters, their leaves never run dry, they bear fruit in and out of season – making all the hard work of preparing and persevering worth it.

Will you tarry in prayer? Will you sit and wait on him, meditating even 1 hour?

Your turn

Write here

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about include:

- What sin of injustice and unforgiveness will you get rid of?
- How can you change the types of prayers you have been praying?
- How will you now create time for reading and meditation on God's word?

Let us pray.

How can I pray for you?

- **You are a believer** but your prayer and meditation seem unproductive. Is the Lord reminding you to do some housekeeping repair the broken altar and return to the usual hour of prayer.
- You used to be a believer, but are a prodigal son/daughter and have forgotten the joys of meditating on God. You have even forgotten how to pray properly. God wants to hear you return to him, seek him with all your heart, you will find him, he is not far from any of us.
- You have never received the gift of Christ, being eternal life and neither have you received his Holy Spirit. But you want to pray, you want God to give you the Spirit of Jesus who teaches you all things including how to pray and meditate, just like he taught me.

Write to me so I can pray further for you: <u>dwasake@shaweleroad.com</u>

Next steps

- Visit our website which shows the steps it takes to get to know Jesus and be saved from this wicked generation. <u>https://www.shaweleroad.com/what-must-i-do-to-get-saved</u>
- Invite someone else to join us on this road.
- Here is what else you can do with us:

Information notice board (continued)

Pray for us! Without the Lord, our effort is in vain. Pray that we remain faithful, humble servants.

Subscribe to our <u>YouTube Channel</u> and keep up with our videos which support the website.

Looking for a ministry to partner with (pray, volunteer, give, subscribe to)?

https://www.ihopkc.org/

The International House of Prayer is an evangelical missions organization that is committed to praying for the release of the fullness of God's power and purpose, as we actively win the lost, heal the sick, feed the poor, make disciples, and impact every sphere of society.

Notes

iii See:

21 Things to Pray For: Tips for a Better Prayer Life in 2021 | Cru What Should We Pray For? | Desiring God 40 Things to Pray for When You Need Inspiration – gina m poirier

^{iv} What are some biblical examples of meditation? | GotQuestions.org

^v What is transcendental meditation? | GotQuestions.org

ⁱ Top 10 Jesus Daily Prayer Requests - Beliefnet

ⁱⁱ <u>http://len-seekingthelord.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-top-ten-things-jesus-taught.html</u>