

LTC Flex - Prayer

(An excerpt from “Spiritual Leadership” by J. Oswald Sanders, Chapter 11 - Prayer & Leadership)

The spiritual leader should outpace the rest of the church, above all, in prayer. And yet the most advanced leader is conscious of the possibility of endless development in his prayer life. Nor does he ever feel that he has “already attained.” Dean C. J. Vaughan once said: “If I ever wish to humble anyone, I should ask him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions.”

Prayer is the most ancient, most universal, and most intensive expression of religious instinct. It includes the simplest speech of infant lips and the sublime entreaties of older age. All reach the Majesty on High. Prayer is indeed the Christian’s vital breath and native air.

But, strange paradox, most of us find it hard to pray. We do not delight in drawing near to God. We sometimes pay lip service to the delight and power of prayer. We call it indispensable, we know the Scriptures call for it. Yet we often fail to pray.

Mastering the art of prayer, like anything else, takes time. The time we give it will be a true true measure of its importance to us. We always find time for important things. The most common excuse for little time spent in prayer is the list of “to do’s” that crowd our day—all our many duties. To Martin Luther, and extra load of duties was reason enough to pray more, not less. Hear his plans for the next day’s work: “Work, work from early til late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”

If Luther was busy, and prayed, so can we.

The Christian leader who seeks an example to follow does well to turn to the life of Jesus Himself. Our belief in the necessity of prayer comes from observing His life. Surely if anyone could have sustained life without prayer, it would be the very Son of God Himself. If prayer is silly or unnecessary, Jesus would not have wasted His time at it. But wait! Prayer was the dominant feature of His life and a reoccurring part of His teaching. Prayer kept His moral vision sharp and clear. Prayer gave Him courage to endure the perfect but painful will of His Father. Prayer paved the way for transfiguration. To Jesus, prayer was not a hasty add-on, but a joyous necessity.