

Approaching with Confidence:

A Study of Prayer
and Fasting

Melinda Poitras

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Poitras, Melinda, author.

Title: Approaching with confidence : a study of prayer and fasting / Melinda Poitras.

Description: Weldon Spring : Global Association of Theological Schools, 2018.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018004358 | ISBN 9780757754746 (alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Prayer--Christianity--Textbooks. | Fasting--Religious aspects--Christianity--Textbooks. | Pentecostal churches--Doctrines.

Classification: LCC BV214 .P48 2018 | DDC 248.3/2--dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018004358>

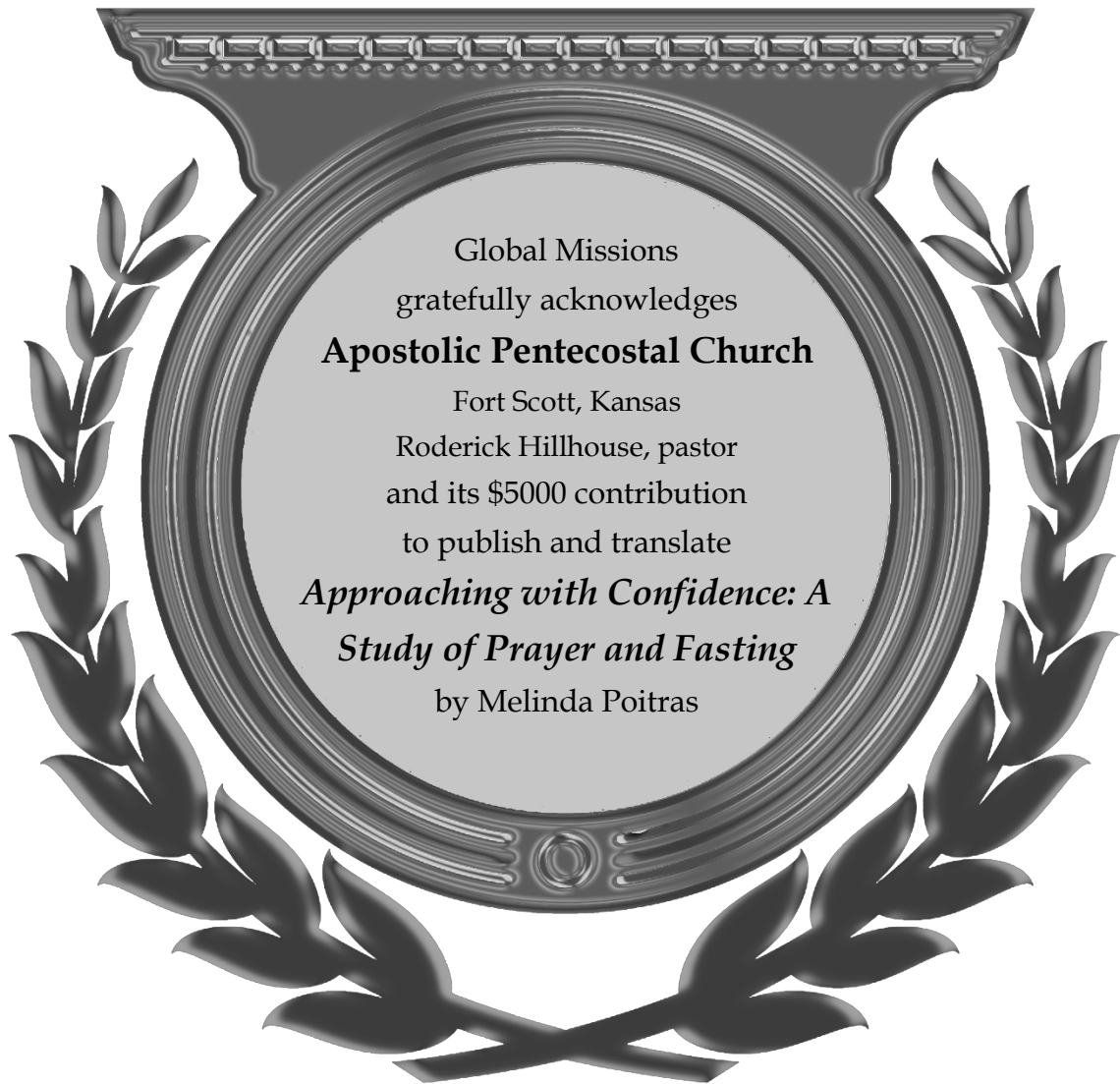


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Lesson 1

The Protocol of Prayer

KEY VERSE

Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.
(Psalm 54:2)

LESSON OBJECTIVES

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Clarify the essential ingredients of successful prayer
- Define *sacrifice* and *sacrament*

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

Introduction

“How do you handle the protocol of it?” he asked me. Confused, I replied, “The protocol of what?”

“Prayer, the exact and proper way that you go about approaching God so that you’re sure He will receive you. I know that people ‘pray through the Tabernacle,’ and that there is a procedure for approaching Him. I just don’t know exactly what it is, and I don’t want to get it wrong.”

I was blown away that anyone would even ask such a question. I understand the Lord is to be respected and He is to be treated with reverence, but no saint of God should ever tie themselves up into knots worrying about how to approach Him. This is what the Bible says about those who seek God:

For He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Skills Required

The Lord did not over-complicate matters for you. What skills must you possess to approach God?

- 1.) You must believe that He is.
- 2.) You must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

After you meet those qualifications, you just seek. Believe He will reward you and seek. Nothing is wrong with “praying through the Tabernacle” (looking at the model of how the Tabernacle was set up and letting each part represent a different type of prayer), but that mode of prayer is not necessary for you to be heard. The God of Heaven loves us so much that He became flesh and lived, breathed, and walked among us. He felt everything that we feel and was tempted in all the ways we are tempted. With pain in every step, He trudged up the hill to Calvary and died for our sins.

The minute He died—the second there was that final exquisite exhalation of breath—the veil ripped in the Temple. No longer were we separated from the presence of God. No longer did we need a priest. All at once—if we believe He exists and He will reward those who diligently seek Him—we can walk right into His throne room.

With one breath, He annihilated hundreds of years of protocol and replaced it with His immediate, tangible, and personal presence. Whenever you are tempted to worry that you are not approaching God in the right way, that you are not following the proper procedure, or that you just haven’t been “holy enough” to enter His presence, bask in the following verses of Scripture:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will

I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised). (Hebrews 10:16b-23)

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Sacrifice and Sacrament

Here's what Merriam-Webster's dictionary and *Strong's Concordance* say about two very popular religious words:

Sacrifice: an act of slaughtering an animal or person or surrendering a possession as an offering to God or to a divine or supernatural figure. [2378 *thysía* – properly, an *offering (sacrifice)*; an official sacrifice *prescribed by God*; hence an offering *the Lord accepts* because *offered on His terms*. <http://biblehub.com/greek/2378.htm>.

Sacrament: a religious ceremony or act of the Christian Church that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace, in particular.

We don't have to follow a twelve-step process or program as with Alcoholics Anonymous or other anti-addiction programs. We don't have to pray a scripted prayer or do a choreographed dance. We can boldly approach the throne of grace because the Lamb that was slain for us became the only high priest we will ever need. Webster defines two of our religious words quite succinctly and we can know: *our Lord is our sacrifice and our sacrament, in and of Himself*.

Secret Ingredients

What then is the true protocol of prayer? If it is no longer about incense, holy water, slaughtered doves, and ceremony, what ingredients are necessary for a successful prayer life? We find the answer to this question in Psalm 54:2: “Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.”

The three ingredients you need for a proper prayer protocol are as follows:

1. God
 2. Yourself
 3. Your words
- When a Roman Catholic priest stands to lead in mass, chanting his ritualized “Hail Mary’s” – that is prayer.
 - When a Pentecostal preacher lifts his hands in front of his congregation and brings their needs before the Lord – that is prayer.
 - When a grieving mother loses a child to war, and she is so angry and hurt she can’t think straight and she throws her head back and screams “Why?” straight into the heavens – that is prayer.
 - When toddlers gather around their lunch and recite their rhyming, habitual grace – that is prayer.

Conclusion

Prayer has no special ingredient, no particular requirement, and no list of hoops you must jump through. No outside force can judge you; no fear of failure should stop you. If there is someone to pray, someone to hear, and words – prayer is happening. God is always there to hear. The rest is up to us.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

Give short answers to the following questions.

1. What two skills must you possess to approach God?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____

2. What happened in the Temple the minute Jesus died?

3. Who is our high priest?

4. In your own words, define *sacrifice*.

5. In your own words, define *sacrament*.

6. List the three ingredients that you need for a proper prayer protocol.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Personal Study Notes