

*Re-charging
Your
Prayer Life*

by Lonnie Cruse

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Re-charging Your Prayer Life



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DEDICATION

For all my sisters in Christ who strive every single day to bring light into this world by example, by teaching, and by encouraging others. I pray God's blessings on each and every one of you!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to my husband, Don Cruse, for spending time helping me locate and squash whatever errors we could find in the manuscript, and Pam Windhorst and Debby Biles who each read all of my manuscripts with a wonderful eye to detail.

A special thank you also to Evelyn Critchfield, who first suggested I write this book (when I couldn't seem to pluck up the courage all on my own) and to Joyce Jamerson who encouraged me throughout the writing of this book.



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INTRODUCTION

In over four decades as a Christian I've attended many ladies' classes—the weekly or monthly variety or special one day gatherings—all designed for women to spend time together worshiping and studying, sharing one another's joys and sorrows, and supporting one another in our daily walks as Christians. One thing I've noticed, we women most often say we want to learn more about or improve on our prayer lives. I so identify with that.

The congregation I attend in Paducah, Kentucky, is near the Ohio River, and for several years the ladies there have tossed around the idea of having a special prayer time by the river. This year the plans are finally made and—Lord willing—we'll actually accomplish it; except the river is at flood stage and not cooperating, so it will be Prayer by the Pond at Noble Park. One of the ladies is giving a lesson on Lydia and her friends praying by the river (Acts 16:13) and I'm scheduled to give a short lesson on prayer. Uh oh. Time to really dig in.

Over the years I've written articles on a variety of subjects that have been published in newsletters for Christian women. I've even written a couple of articles on prayer. My dream was to write something longer like a useful workshop or book on prayer, but the importance of the subject, our private—and sometimes public—conversations with our Heavenly Father gave me pause. A rather long pause.

This book is a result of the study and research I did on the subject. It contains suggestions I hope will help both you and me to a better prayer life and consequently a closer relationship with our Lord. More importantly, it focuses on the prayers of Jesus and His teachings on the subject—which is, of course, where our focus should be.

Thank you for showing your love for the Lord and your determination to have a better prayer life and a closer relationship to God by reading it. All Scripture quotes were taken from the New King James Version.

Lonnie Cruse, 2009

RE-CHARGING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Chapter One

WHERE ARE THE JUMPER CABLES WHEN WE NEED THEM? *Refocusing our Prayer Life*

I've been praying since early childhood, but I've known for a long time that my prayer life needed a jump-start. Maybe your prayer life needs one too? Okay, let's work on it together.

Have you ever tried speaking to someone who ignored you or wouldn't respond to you? Instantaneous chill in the air, right? God speaks to us through His word, but if we don't read our Bibles, we're basically ignoring Him. And if we don't pray, we aren't responding to Him.

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Ever had a *friend* who only called or came over when she needed something? And if **you** needed something, she was suddenly MIA? Aren't we doing the same if we only pray when we need something from God?

Before we actually begin this study, let's take a quick look at who has the right to pray.

In John 9, Jesus heals a Jewish man who was born blind. When word spread about this miracle, the man was brought before the Pharisees who questioned him closely as to how this happened, particularly since it happened on the Sabbath. Because he wasn't afraid to speak the truth and give Jesus the credit, the healed man was cast out of the synagogue. The fact that he was cast out tells us he was someone who worshiped there, someone who was a believer, meaning someone who knew God's word and followed it, at least as much as had been revealed at that time.

The point I want to make here is in the response of the man to the Pharisees in John 9:31: "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him."

Get that? God does not hear sinners. That's you and me? Now what? Jesus promised to take away our sins, **if** we obey. Obey what? Let's look at Acts chapter 2 and see.

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Peter preached to the crowd (Acts 2:14, 29-36). They listened, they believed, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter what they should do (Acts 2:37). Peter answered telling them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38-40). They immediately obeyed (Acts 2:41). Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Were they now perfect? No, but they were forgiven and they continued to work toward perfection, knowing they had forgiveness of their sins whenever they repented. What about someone who is seeking the truth, earnestly trying to find it?

Two future disciples prayed as they sought the truth of the gospel. In Acts 9:3-12, Paul saw the vision of Jesus, then he traveled on into the city, and Ananias was told by the Lord to go to Paul because Paul was waiting for him and **praying**. Many people believe Paul was saved when he saw the vision, but look at Acts 9:6b: “And the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”

The Lord told Paul that Ananias would tell him what he **must** do to obey. He did not tell him what he might want to do some time or another nor did he tell him what he ought to think about doing. I repeat; he told him what he must do and Paul did it.

In Acts 10, Cornelius’ prayers and alms brought his soul’s needs before God and brought Peter before Cornelius and his family to teach them what they **must** do (verse 6). Cornelius obeyed—immediately.

Neither Paul nor Cornelius were Christians when they first prayed, but because they were actively and honestly seeking Him, God answered their prayers, sending someone to teach them. Is anyone praying for you or me to come teach them about the gospel? To convert them?

What if we sin after we become Christians?

A disciple asked for prayers when he sinned publicly. When Simon sinned in Acts 8:19, Peter told him to repent and pray. Notice his response in Acts 8:24, “Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’”

We must repent with prayer for our sins, but remember it is also scriptural to ask others to pray for and with us, particularly when the sin is public as Simon’s was.

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And if we don't repent? Luke 13:3 says, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." That's Jesus speaking, by the way.

Back to our study on prayer. Over the years I've bought and read a ton of books on the subject of prayer—not to mention all the Scriptures that teach about it—listened to lessons and sermons, took copious notes, discussed the problems of a busy life and lack of prayer time with other women, and, to tell the truth, had the best intentions in the world to have a faithful prayer life but zero will-power to follow through consistently.

So I did the obvious—I prayed about my lack of faithful praying. And I've made **another** new commitment to my Lord. **To pray...daily...faithfully.** And to stop zipping through my prayer time like a crazed, out of control rocket ship and really concentrate—really worship.

To do this, (a) I'm getting up a few minutes earlier each morning, as I should have done eons ago, and (b) I'm vowing not to play a certain computer game that I

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really enjoy and on which I can easily blow an entire hour each and every day. (I mean, really, does God even care that I currently hold the family record for least moves/fastest wins in a computer game?) And that's an hour during which I could have been studying and/or praying.

I also hauled out that ton of books on prayer and started re-reading. Then I bought more books by various authors and hustled to read through them, sometimes reading one chapter a day in two or three separate books wanting to get a grip on the subject of prayer ASAP to strengthen my prayer life.

And I wanted to learn more about prayer so I could share with other women because that's my true mission in life—to encourage other women and build them up (and myself in the process). I'm deeply saddened when someone learns the truth, seems committed, and then later walks away from the Lord. I want to do all I can to help other women stay in the race and reach the finish line, like Paul talked about in Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

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When Mary was told she was to give birth to the Savior of the world and that her cousin, Elizabeth, was already expecting her first child in her old age, what did Mary do? Luke 1:39-40 says: “Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Luke 1:46-55 contains the only recorded prayer we have prayed by Mary. In it she praises God, apparently not afraid to accept the challenge that bearing and raising this Child will bring to her. Her trust in God is beautiful to read.

Both of these women were facing unusual circumstances due to the birth of their first child. Imagine the comfort and support they gave each other. We often need that same comfort and support from each other. My prayer is that this book will be of comfort and support to you.

I’ve yet to read a book on prayer that didn’t have some excellent suggestions or tips for enhancing our prayer lives by getting us into the habit of praying and keeping us there. You can find tips...

- ...about the tools we should keep handy when we pray.
- ...on when to pray and what to pray about.
- ...on journaling about prayer or Bible studies by writing down our prayers, and keeping prayer lists.
- ...and tips on the tips.

Whew! Yet something always seemed to be lacking.

When I finally allowed myself to jump off the whirling gerbil wheel of multiple book reading for a bit, I think I figured it out. Most of the books I’d bought were written by men for men (although there are a few by women). And sometimes the authors made statements that contradicted the Bible. Or the book concentrated on the author’s opinion about prayer, not on what the Bible has to teach us about the subject. Had they actually studied their Bibles about the subject of prayer? More to the point, had I?

Coming to my senses, I picked up the best teaching book of all about prayer, my Bible, and I began to study with the ultimate teacher on prayer— Jesus Christ. Remember Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus? She sat at the feet of Jesus and

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listened rather than bustling about the house doing chores to make Him welcome. When Martha complained about Mary not helping her, Jesus reminded Martha in Luke 10:42, “But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

The cleanest of houses gets dirty as soon as we put the dust cloths and brooms away; laundry we just folded quickly needs washing again; the newly-mown lawn takes over in mere days if left to itself; and meals must be cooked over and over. Just when our work is done, it comes undone. But what we learn from Jesus and practice in our lives will take us clear into heaven, if we persevere.

During the course of these chapters I hope to share with you what our Lord said about prayer and the examples He set in His prayer life. And yes, I’ll share a few tips I’ve learned along the way that seem to help both myself and other women enrich their prayer lives.

A study of the Bible and purchasing the ton of books on prayer that led to my nearly-empty wallet helped in my research for this book, but personal interviews or group discussions are always helpful as well. To that end I created a survey on personal prayer habits and approached my sisters in Christ with it to learn about their prayer/study habits. I’ll be using some of those same questions as study questions at the end of some of the chapters.

Questions for Chapter One:

1. When did you first learn how to pray?

2. Who taught you or how did you learn?

3. Would you like to have a better, stronger, or more regular prayer life—one that is built on a closer relationship with God?

