**BMi SALTS COURSE**

**PRAYER**

Prayer is communication with God. Our ability and authority to communicate are gifts from God.

**How to Pray**

1. With sincerity and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit and

2. with dedication, which requires discipline for both individual and corporate prayer. Prayer is a significant aspect of our relationship with God.

**Subjects for Prayer**

We should pray for;

1. the leaders of the world (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

2. nations (Matthew 28)

3. all men (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

4. the need for labourers (Matthew 9:36-38)

5*.* the need for revival and harvest.

 A revival is not a harvest, though a revival will help bring a harvest. A revival is the stirring up of those already in the church. A harvest is bringing the unsaved into the church.

6. new converts (Galatians 4:19)

7. reformation of the nation and the nations of the earth.

**Prayer for People and the Kingdom**

1. Paul’s heart for people that they might grow in Christ.

 *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.* Galatians 4:19

2. He was committed to care for them (Romans 9:1-3, 10:1; Ephesians 1:15-18; Philippians 1:2-4; Acts 20:31; 2 Corinthians 2:4). He was so committed to people that he laboured and travailed daily in prayer and supplication for them. If we would allow God to create a hunger and labour in prayer for souls we would be more effective. In Acts 2:42-47 we see how the church became spiritually aflame in prayer for souls.

 We need to pray for the unsaved to be set free from the ‘god of this world” that would blind and bind them. (John 10: 10; Galatians 4:19).

 Paul knew the commitment God expected of him which motivated his travail in prayer.

 Isaiah tells us *as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children*. (Isaiah 66:8; Ephesians. 6:19; Colossians 4:12-13).

 *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* Colossians 4:12

**The Challenge to Prayer**

We must accept this call to prayer for several reasons:

1. It is God’s ordained method of working with Him in the fulfilment His great plan.

2. Our Holy Spirit inspired prayer for the lost is God’s method of preparing us to work with those who will be saved.

3. Prayer is the foundation of all spiritual life. (Luke 18: 1).

**Prayer Groups**

1. Scripture demonstrates the importance of group prayer (Acts 2:42). The Book of Acts speaks many times of group prayer. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit came upon 120 gathered together. As long as the church has existed, prayer groups have been important (Acts 4:31).

2. History demonstrates the power of group prayer. Revivals of religion are commonly preceeded by intense group prayer.

3. Jesus promised His presence to prayer groups (Matthew 18:19-20).

4. Prayer groups teach harmony and unity (Matthew 18:19-20).

*5.* Spiritual power is generated in prayer groups. (Deuteronomy 32:29-30; Leviticus 26:8),

6. Prayer groups teach Christians to hear God speak in the place of prayer. For instance, as the group waits in silence, thoughts come, to some a verse of scripture, a hymn or a song, etc. and these can be shared. Such activities need to be lead by a mature Christian who is able to judge.

7. Group prayer trains people in prayer and challenges them to mobilise others for prayer. Every prayer warrior should seek a partner with whom to pray. (John 1:40-42).

**Organizing a Prayer Group**

1. Have a prayer list prepared. Such prayer lists are important because they help us to use our time wisely in prayer and to pray intelligent prayers.

3. Pray through on a single point until the prayer is finished (the Holy Spirit will indicate this to the leader). This helps establish a unity and singleness of purpose for the prayer time.

4. Prayer meetings should be ‘prayer’ meetings. When a prayer group gathers its primary purpose should be prayer. Take care the prayer meeting does not degenerate into a gossip session, music concerts or even a teaching seminar. It is appropriate to spend some time on music or discussion, but this needs to be monitored by the leader.

5. Never allow criticism. All matters of prayer or discussion prior to, during, and after a group prayer meeting should be kept positive. Criticism must never be a focal point of any gathering. Professor Hallesby concedes, *It is easy to criticise leaders. After the thing is done, everybody is wise. We all see how it should have been done. Beforehand nobody sees what ought to be done, but that is just when leaders must act. Let us pray for our leaders at all times instead of constantly criticising them.*

 The purpose of a prayer group is prayer, not evaluation or discussion of the church programme. Torrey enlarges, *Oh, if we would talk less to one another against our ministers, and more to God on their behalf, we would have far better ministers than we have now.*

**The Church and Prayer**

 A praying church can be in touch with God’s heart and purpose for them.

 A praying church will resist the attacks of Satan, producing holy, praying members, helps make a praying nation.

**Growth Steps for Churches**

 As people of a church grow, the church itself grows, and as a church grows its outreach around the world grows. To bring about this process of growth, there are several growth steps the local church must consider.

1. It must elevate prayer to its appropriate place of importance.

2. Its members must pray for its pastor.

3. Its leadership must pray. Rarely will one find a church whose members pray if its leadership doesn’t.

**The Leader and Prayer**

1. The leader’s prayer life is vital to his own spiritual growth.

2. The leader’s prayer life is vital to sermon preparation.

3. The leader should give much time to prayer. We have heard how Martin Luther declared he had so much work to do that he must spend three hours in prayer every day. He knew that much time spent in prayer would clear his thoughts and help him make better use of his time.

4. The leader should set aside time for an annual or quarterly retreat. Jesus set aside time to be alone with God.

 Moses came to meet God. God did the talking; Moses did the waiting. Coming to the presence of God develops revelation of spiritual truths and gives guidance and direction. Prayer must first be a place of revelation, then intercession, then impartation. As Moses came to God he **received revelation, he then made intercession and then imparted to the people.**

5. The leader should set aside time for regular prayer retreats for the leadership.

6. The pastor should preach often on the subject of prayer. Though prayer is taught best by example and understood by experience, Christians need training and inspiration in this matter.

**Principles of Prayer and Warfare**

 God has provided the Christian with spiritual “armour” (Ephesians 6:13-17) and “weapons” (2 Corinthians 10:4). But before we can wield them effectively, we must understand four facts.

1. There is a conflict in us and in the world (Revelation 12:7-12; Ephesians 6:12)

2. It is a spiritual conflict, not a physical one (Ephesians 6:12)

3. The enemy is set on defeating us (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8)

4. We are called to be victorious (1 Timothy 1: 18; Ephesians 6:10-17)

**The Conflict**

 There are a number of spiritual battles a Christian faces, each one being just one aspect of the overall spiritual conflict with the powers of darkness.

1. The battle for the mind (2 Corinthians 10:5)

2. The battle against the flesh (1 Peter 2:11; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Timothy 6:11-12)

3. The battle against the world (1 John 5:4; 1 John 2:15-17)

 *The important thing for us to establish in our hearts and minds is that we are living* *from a position of victory. The child of God does not work towards victory, but from* *it.*

 It is necessary to understand how our enemy works or we will find ourselves suffering repeated attacks.

 Before we can become effective we must be able to distinguish between the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the enemy.

 **Satan verses Holy Spirit**

 1. The enemy condemns The Spirit convicts

 2. The enemy pressures The Spirit leads

 3. The enemy produces fear The Spirit engenders faith

 4. The enemy focuses on self The Spirit focuses on God

**Armour**

 For our defense, the Lord has supplied us with armour designed to ward off every attack of the enemy. Ephesians 6:11-18

1. The belt of **truth** (v. 14)

2. The breastplate of **righteousness,** faith and love (v. l4)

3. The sandals of **readiness** (v. 15)

4. The shield of **faith** (v. l6)

5. The helmet of **salvation** (v. l7)

6. The **sword of the Spirit** (v. l7)

7. **Communication** (v. l8) *and pray in the Spirit on all occasions*

 Communication with the Holy Spiritis the all important if victory is to be assured.

8. **Comradeship** (v. 18)  *...always keep on praying for all the saints.* (see also Colossians 1:3; 9-13; 4:2-3). A soldier can only become effective in battle when he is organised as part of a corporate disciplined army.

**Developing Public Prayer**

For the purposes of these notes public prayer is that which is used in leading a public meeting.

**Focus of Prayer**

Prayer should always be focused on the Lord and be in accordance with His Word.

Prayer emphasises our dependence on God.

**Opening and Closing Prayer**

 These are more than a formality, but a recognition of the person and authority of Him before whom we meet.

 **Opening prayers** should be relatively short and directed toward the Lord, as our desire is to focus people’s attention on God, rather than themselves and their circumstances.

 **Closing prayer** is a benediction, or can be more. It is appropriate to give thanks to the Lord for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A scriptural benediction is a fitting conclusion to any worship service; Jude 24-25; Numbers 6:24; etc.

 **General Prayer**

 This is the major prayer during a service and should consist of the following elements; Praise and Thanksgiving. Petition for those in authority and for the church; Intercession for those in need in the congregation and beyond.

The above prayers will of necessity be rather formal and we need to be aware that we are praying on behalf of the congregation. They should therefore, be simple, to the point and as brief as is conveniently possible, (that is, don’t waffle).

**Ministry prayer**

This is usually the prayer offered in a service for individuals and their particular and perceived needs. These prayers are seldom prayed with the congregation in mind; sometimes it is appropriate, for congregational participation, to leave microphone on, or on other occasions to ensure it is turned off.

This prayer will often have a prophetic aspect. This is also a common time for those with particular physical needs to seek prayer for healing. This type of prayer requires a significant degree of faith and we should spend time with the Lord in preparation for such an occasion. Care should be taken not to launch into such activity unless one senses the unction of the Spirit. Often dis-service to the Kingdom is done through such activity.

**Fasting**

Fasting in most cases refers to going without food to concentrate on spiritual activity. Thus it helps to bring the appetites of the physical body under control. Fasting is a means of subduing self, but it often becomes a tool for pride and self effort.

In pure motivation, however, it is a most valuable asset in focusing our attention on the Lord. It provides more time to be with the Lord.