

Why Pray Scripture?

By Jonathan Graf

There are many methods of prayer that we can use to develop our prayer lives. But the best, the most powerful one that I have discovered is praying God's Word, praying Scripture.

Writing in *Pray!* magazine, author Jane McLain said, "When I turn what Scripture says about God into meditation, prayer, and praise. I relate to Him more intimately, praise Him more effectively, soak up His love more fully, and pray His will more soundly." It can really do all that? Yes! Here are three benefits of praying God's Word.

Prayer naturally brings us to the Word, and God's Word should always bring us to prayer.

The two go together. Unfortunately, most of us keep them separated at all times. We have our time to read the Bible and our time to pray. It was revolutionary to me when I learned to put them together. I could start to read a chapter in the Bible, but flow in and out of prayer as I did. That practice made God's Word stand out more as I meditated and asked Him questions about it.

Previously, I had from time to time experienced the voice of the Holy Spirit illuminating a verse or phrase or passage to my heart. And occasionally I had felt the exhilaration that comes from knowing God had shed personal light through His Word. But with this new practice, I experienced that phenomenon on a very regular basis. Scripture reading came more alive for me and I wanted to do it more, which in turn produced a more meaningful prayer life.

Praying God's Word gives us a deeper sense of what

to pray for a situation.

I don't know about you, but I often struggle to find the words to pray. I mean, I can pray the obvious for a situation. My friend Joe needs a new job; I pray that he'll get one. I tried to regularly pray for my daughter, Amy, but nothing more than the everyday stuff came to mind: that she'd do well in school, grow in her faith, be protected from evil influences, that sort of thing. Scripture gives me a better idea of meaningful things to pray. Now I keep a list of thirty-one biblical virtues from a Pray! article by Bob Hostetler in my Bible. Each one is based upon the language of a verse. For example, for Amy I may pray number five, "Self-control," which is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:6: "Father, help Amy not to be like many others around her, but let her be alert and self-controlled in all she does."

McClain concurs with this principle. She tells of a time when a friend called asking her to pray for his brother, Jerry, a pastor, who had just had a heart attack. Jane wanted to pray for more than just Jerry's healing and comfort for the family. So she turned to Psalm 138:

The first verses praise God, which is always an appropriate place to start. The third verse says, "When I called, you answered me; you made me bold." So I boldly asked that God answer quickly. The next verses tell about kings giving thanks to God because of David's testimony. Since Jerry was a pastor, I prayed these verses, assuming that more people needed to hear his messages and turn to the Lord.

Verse seven says, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life." I prayed that God would revive Jerry. The psalm ends, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever—do not abandon the works of your hands." I prayed believing God would not forsake Jerry. I closed my Bible, feeling assured that I'd done my part and that God would do His. A few days later, Charlie told me that

his brother had gone home from the hospital and was doing much better.

Praying Scripture is powerful because we are confident that we are praying God's will for a situation.

First John 5:14-15 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

If I am praying for my friend Joe's job situation, I may not know if the job he is being interviewed for is God's will for him. But I do know that it is God's will that Joe may be counted worthy of His calling and that by God's power working in him, he might fulfill every good purpose God has called him to (2 Thessalonians 1:11). I do know that God has a perfect plan for Joe, plans to prosper him and not harm him, to give him hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). I can pray those things for Joe and be fully confident that they will come to pass.

Learning to pray Scripture, can take our prayer to an entirely new level. It is a great method to add to our arsenal of prayer weapons.

—Jonathan Graf is the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network and the publisher of PrayerShop Publishing and Prayer Connect magazine. The article is adapted from his book *The Power of Personal Prayer*.