

Being a Spiritually Minded Christian
Part Nine
The Delight of Prayer

- *As believers we have a choice: We can be naturally minded, carnally minded, or spiritually minded.*
- *The three areas that enable us to develop into spiritually minded Christians are our relationship to the Word of God, Prayer, and Christian Fellowship.*
- *We spent a number of weeks studying how to become spiritually minded Christians in relationship to the Word of God.*
- *We are now going to study how to become spiritually minded Christians through our relationship with God in prayer.*

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- *The naturally minded man does not see any value in prayer and may even see the act of prayer as both foolish and purposeless.*
- *The naturally minded person may want to accomplish certain goals and even make sacrifices for those objectives, but they see that it is through their own hard work and determination alone that their goals will be realized.*
- *The true value of prayer can only be appreciated by a spiritually minded Christian, since it is spiritually discerned.*
- *When a Christian is naturally minded then prayer is relegated to an unimportant part of his or her daily life and in some cases may be completely absent.*
- *To an unbeliever who is naturally minded, prayer appears as useless as if someone were talking to themselves or to an imaginary being.*
- *To the spiritually minded Christian prayer is both delightful and essential. It is delightful because they recognize that they are actually communing with God. It is essential because they realize their utter dependence on God and that without prayer nothing of eternal value can be accomplished.*
- *A naturally minded Christian can be actively involved in ministry, but most of his time and energy will be focused on performing activities that do not involve prayer such as sermon preparation, preaching, witnessing, helping others, or*

serving in the church. Even though each of these activities is useful and important, without prayer the fruitfulness of these activities will be limited.

- *Without prayer all their activities will fail to produce spiritual maturity.*
- *In contrast to the naturally minded person who can live a disciplined life, the carnally minded person is impulsive and is chiefly motivated by satisfying their immediate desires and lusts and does not see any value in personal discipline or in resisting the lusts of the flesh “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” (Romans 8:7).*
- *A naturally minded Christian will not spend much time engaged in prayer because he thinks there are better ways of spending his time. A carnally minded Christian does not engage in prayer because he lacks any form of personal discipline and his motivation is chiefly to satisfy his fleshly lusts and experience immediate gratification.*
- *A naturally minded Christian does not appreciate the great value of prayer. A carnally minded Christian fails to find any enjoyment in prayer.*
- *Often Christians are prayerless because they do not see the value of prayer.*
- *Through our relationship with the Word of God, the Bible, the truths and foundation of our faith are understood, but it is through prayer that the realities of those truths become established in our lives.*
- *The Bible contains many wonderful truths and promises, but only when we begin to pray do these truths and promises become a reality.*
- *We can read in the Bible about how God answers prayer, heals the sick, brings deliverance to people’s lives, and leads believers supernaturally, but it is only through prayer that we will experience and benefit from those promises.*
- *Today we want to explore the delight of prayer.*

Psalm 16:11 (NKJV)

You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- *Psalm 16:11 can easily be understood in the context of prayer, because in what other spiritual activity are we able to so wonderfully commune with God?*
- *The psalmist David describes the joy of prayer with the words, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

- *The Hebrew word “presence” literally means, “front; head, face; the front,” and it is always in the plural form. Therefore, when the psalmist says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy” he is inferring a face-to-face encounter with God. The word “presence” always being in the plural may speak of our encounter with God as multi-dimensional where He reveals many different aspects of who He is.*
- *As one communes with God and He begins to reveal to us different facets of Who He is, it produces a deep and profound joy within us. The Hebrew word translated as “fullness of joy” used here does not mean just simply being glad, but transcends this to mean “extreme joy, exceeding joy, jubilation.”*
- *Apostle Peter described the type of joy we experience when we begin to realize how wonderful Jesus is: “whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” (1 Peter 1:8).*
- *The psalmist, David, then continued by describing the closeness of the fellowship he experienced with God, “At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11).*
- *“At Your right hand” indicates the level of intimacy one can experience, as Jesus said in John 15:15. “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”*
- *“Pleasures” reflects the sheer delight and sweetness of fellowship with God.*
- *“Forevermore” speaks of the unending relationship we have with Christ. “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5).*
- *In prayer we can experience fullness of joy in His presence, the sheer delight of unbroken fellowship with Christ. He will also reveal to us how to live an overcoming life that is no longer plagued by anxiety, doubts, and confusion, “You will show me the path of life.”*
- *If prayer is to be such a delight, why do so many Christians struggle in developing a vibrant prayer life?*
- *Many Christians see prayer as primarily a way to make their requests known to God and therefore as a task to be performed. If this is our primary goal in prayer, then prayer will become arduous and something done out of obligation and not love.*

Psalm 100 (NKJV) A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

¹Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

²Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

³Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

⁴Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

⁵For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

- *Psalm 100 provides us with some of the keys to developing, maintaining, and ever deepening our prayer life.*
- *The very title of this psalm sets the tone in developing these crucial principles: “A Psalm of Thanksgiving.”*
- *Expressing thankfulness in prayer is absolutely essential in order to enjoy a relationship with God through prayer.*
- *The pattern of thanksgiving and praise seen in Psalm 100 is not to be regarded as a rigid template that one must follow, but an example of how one can experience the sheer delight of fellowship with God in prayer.*

¹Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

- *The Hebrew word translated as “make a joyful shout” means “a shout in triumph over the enemies, to rejoice, to cheer” and it also can carry the meaning “to sound an alarm, to raise a battle cry, a sound or a signal to march forward or go to war.”*
- *“Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!” can be seen as a declaration of the victory we have received through Jesus Christ for we have overcome the accuser of the brethren, the devil, by the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 12:11).*
- *Sometimes the enemy, the circumstances of life, and even our own emotions try to crush us with despair, discouragement, fear, or simply a sense of weariness. These are the times when we need to stand up against these attacks, raise our voices, and make a joyful shout to the Lord and declare to all the lands—“we are victorious in Jesus Christ.”*

²Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

- *“Serve the LORD with gladness” - Just as the priests came daily before the Lord in the Holy Place to minister to Him with hearts filled with jubilation, we are to express the same heart of gladness.*

- *Out of all the nations, and out of all the tribes of Israel, the descendants of Levi were chosen by God to be His priests and were given the special privilege to minister before Him.*
- *Just as God chose the priests from among the Levites to be those closest to Him and to minister to Him, Christ has chosen us. “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). That is something to shout about!*
- *Every time we come before the Lord, we are to awaken ourselves to the reality we are serving the living and true God and therefore we are to “come before His presence with singing” which is a joyful exultation.*
- *When we come before the Lord we are to be jubilant because of how wonderful, merciful, and gracious our God is. We do not come before God to beg for His mercy. We “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16 TNIV).*

³Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

- *Prayer positions us to come before God and surrender fully to His will and to His Lordship. “Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.” This will open the door of our hearts so we can begin to truly worship God.*
- *Through praise and worship in prayer we begin to recognize and acknowledge that God knows what is best for us because He is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. “We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”*
- *As we spend time in worship and praise, acknowledging that God’s ways are perfect, our hearts begin to experience the peace and security of fully surrendering to His will and confessing that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd and that He gave His life for us. (John 10:11).*
- *When we spend time in prayer acknowledging and rejoicing that Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives a wonderful peace begins to fill us. We also begin to realize with deep conviction that the safest place to be is in the center of God’s will.*
- *Then we will be able to pray with complete and joyful abandonment the words that Jesus prayed, “nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done,” knowing that Jesus paid the full price for our salvation on the cross of Calvary and what He has purposed for each of our lives is the very best. (Luke 22:42).*

- *It is during times of prayer when we are rejoicing in Christ as our Good Shepherd that the words of Jesus will become a reality. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30).*
- *God does not want us to be burdened by the pressures and anxieties of this life. He wants us to “know that the LORD, He is God” and that “we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”*
- *The first step to finding that rest that Jesus promises us is to hear Him calling, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” However, we will only be able to clearly hear His voice when we come to Him in prayer.*
- *The naturally minded Christian wants to resolve his problems using his own strength and reasoning power, which only increases the burdens of this life and ultimately leads him further away from God’s plans and purposes for his life.*
- *The carnally minded Christian wants to ignore and hide from the problems and burdens he faces, which may cause him to turn to addictive behaviours to temporarily escape from the problems which will cause the situation to grow worse.*
- *The spiritually minded Christian immediately turns to God in prayer for guidance, strength, and peace.*
- *The second step is to be willing to take the heavy yokes that are crushing us and to give them to Christ as we surrender our lives and all our cares and problems to Him, “casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7).*
- *The third step is to exchange our heavy yoke for the yoke God offers us. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.”*
- *To give our yoke over to Christ does not mean we have no further responsibilities or requirements. However, what He is asking us to do and carry out will neither destroy nor crush us, “for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*
- *To take our heavy burdens and worries and give them to Christ and take upon ourselves His yoke is a learning process. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.” One of the chief places we learn how to do that is in the place of prayer.*

- *As we come to prayer with a heart of thanksgiving and our mouths filled with praise we will learn how gentle and meek Jesus really is.*
- *How do we know when we are carrying His yoke or our yoke? Simply by asking, “Are we burdened down with the problems and worries of this life or do we have a deep inner joy independent of the circumstances we face?” Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*
- *What does the light yoke that Christ wants us to carry look like?*
- *It looks like thanksgiving. “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*
- *It looks like joyful obedience. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3).*
- *It looks like trusting in God’s faithfulness. “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” (John 14:1).*
- *It looks like living a life fully surrendered to God’s purposes. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10).*
- *It is a daily process to learn to give over the heavy yokes and burdens of this life and take upon ourselves His light and easy yoke, “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.” (2 Peter 3:18).*
- *Christians can be overwhelmed by what is happening in the world and by the uncertainty of the future, but Christ exhorts us, “and you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” (Matthew 24:6).*
- *Christ provides a further warning, “and because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12).*
- *God never meant for us to carry the burdens of the world. The way we give these burdens over to God is by coming before Him with thanksgiving, praise, and worship, confessing that we can no longer carry them, and humbly asking God to carry them for us.*
- *We give thanks for His faithfulness and all He does for us.*
- *We praise Him for the perfection of His plans and that the final outcome will bring an end to all ungodliness and rebellion.*

- *We worship Him for who He is.*
- *Once we have a clear view of God's faithfulness, love, power, and holiness, we begin to pray and intercede for the needs of those around us and even for the nations.*

⁴Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

- *This verse gives us a picture of how to bring vitality and joy to our prayer life.*
- *Many times Christians say they have a difficult time being consistent in their daily time of prayer, but sometimes it is because they are staying outside and not entering in and communing with God.*
- *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving is the door pass and praise is how we position ourselves to experience His presence. God inhabits the praises of His people.*
- *Sometimes Christians are looking for an emotional experience in regards to God's presence, but it is actually a heart filled with thanksgiving and praise that brings the reality of God into our lives.*

⁵For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

- *"For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations" describes the source of our thanksgiving, praise, and worship.*
- *Notice that Psalm 100 contains four imperative statements which if we apply them will help ignite our prayer life:*
- *"Make a joyful shout to the Lord" This sets the tone for our prayer time.*
- *"Serve the Lord with gladness" This provides us with the right attitude as we see our pray time as our ministry before the Lord. Prayer is part of our spiritual service to God.*
- *"Know that the Lord, He is God" This gives us the right perspective in terms of our relationship with God.*
- *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving" This provides us with the door pass to enter into His presence.*
- *My time with the Lord generally moves from thanksgiving to praise to worship.*
- *I begin by just recalling some of the wonderful things God has done in my life such as the salvation I received through Jesus' sacrificial suffering, death, and resurrection.*
- *Next, as I continue to be thankful, I begin to recognize the great power and wisdom in everything God does which results in praise.*
- *Finally I begin to recognize who He is which leads me into worship.*

- *We don't need another healing, miracle, or answered prayer to be thankful. All we need is to be thankful.*
- *Thanksgiving is a response to what God does for us.*
- *Praise is a response to the greatness of God in terms of His power and mighty works.*
- *Worship is a response to Who God is—His character and nature.*
- *Thanksgiving enables us to enjoy the great things God has done for us.*
- *Praise enables us to rejoice in God's glory and power.*
- *Worship enables us to adore and revere God Himself.*