

ALL THINGS
ARE POSSIBLE
through PRAYER

CHARLES L. ALLEN



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Scripture is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To
my dear friends of
Grace Methodist Church
Atlanta, Georgia,
whose love and prayers have
blessed me during the more than
ten years I have been their pastor

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Preface

Keys for Locked Doors

It is a humbling thing for me to know that hundreds of thousands of people all over the world have been helped through reading the book you hold in your hands. I have heard from many of those readers over the years, and I know this to be true. So it pleases me that Revell has decided to publish this new edition of *All Things Are Possible through Prayer*.

I invite you to join me on the most amazing road you'll ever travel as we take the best journey you'll never finish! Why do I say that? Because while faith is a simple thing, it is not easy. Rather, it is a lifelong journey for every praying person, young or old, from any walk of life. Together in these pages you and I will discover why we pray, how we pray, and how God answers those prayers. We'll also take encourage-

in contemporary life. And in the process, we'll draw closer to our Lord.

We are living in troubling times. Yet I believe that with God nothing is hopeless. My wish is that you learn to nurture that belief yourself. To that end, I have sought in these pages to point out some of the locked doors of life and some of the prayer-keys that will open those doors.

Both the faithful and the doubting have taken heart in the words of Jesus: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). I have lived to see the truth in that Scripture, and I believe that, indeed, all things are possible through prayer.

Charles L. Allen
Houston, Texas
2003

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The Receptive Mood

It seems strange that Jesus' disciples should have said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). These men doubtless had grown up in strictly religious homes. They had gone to church and they had prayed all their lives. A year before if you had asked the disciples, "Do you know how to pray?" they would have been indignant. "Of course, we know how to pray," they would have insisted. "We have prayed regularly every day for years."

They could have quoted you many verses in the Bible in reference to prayer. They could have answered the arguments against prayer and given the reasons for prayer. However, when they saw Jesus pray, they realized they did not know how to pray. They saw how much time He gave to prayer and what it meant in His own life. They saw Him go into prayer in

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they saw things become different. To them prayer had been a form but to Christ it was a force.

As those disciples saw Jesus pray, they realized it was something quite different from what they had been doing when they prayed. They realized they didn't know how, after they had seen Jesus pray, and so they said, "Lord, teach us to pray." Their request has been on the lips of many people since that day.

In answer to their request, Jesus told them, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. . . ." That is, the first step in prayer is: you must believe in God, you must center your mind on God, you must feel the presence of God, you must receive the Spirit and power of God into your own mind and heart.

The world is quite familiar with the immortal story of the great Tolstoy. He was wealthy, he was honored, he was acclaimed far and wide, but that did not satisfy. He tells how he ran through the sinful thrills of life but they all left him with a gnawing discontent.

One day he was walking in the country. He saw a peasant and observed the look of peace and happiness on the man's face. Tolstoy said to himself, "This peasant has nothing and yet he seems filled with the joy of life." After a period of honest study, he concluded that he was missing God, and so he sought God. One day he found Him and then he knew the answer to that inner hunger and discontent. As a result of his own experience, Tolstoy gave us this great conclusion: "To know God is to live."

The beginning of prayer is to receive God. That means we must pray in a receptive mood. You get up in the morning thinking of the things you must do that day. Your mind is active and aggressive and hour by hour during the day you spend your thought, time, and effort in your work and activi-

to enjoy the concert, you must change your mood. Instead of being aggressively active, at the concert you must become receptive. Likewise, when we pray, we must be receptive. “Be still, and know that I am God,” said the psalmist.

The first step to prayer is receiving God. The reason many people never learn to pray is that they never change from an aggressive into a receptive mood. We go along through life saying, “This is what I want—this is what I will do”—and prayer is just an additional way of realizing our ambitions.

For large numbers, prayer is merely a spare tire, something to be used when the other tires fail. We plan, we work, and then, if we don’t get what we want and can’t do what our hearts are set on, we say, “God, you get it for me,” or, “God, you do it for me.” We try to make prayer just a continuation of our “go-getting” spirit of modern life.

But in countless ways, God breaks in upon our lives. For example, you get up one morning feeling extra good. The sky is blue, the air is crisp, you feel good, you think of your opportunities of the day. You say, “I am so thankful to be alive.” But thankful to whom? Not to the sky—it wouldn’t understand your feelings. Not to your family and friends—they mean much to you but they didn’t create your world. You are not thankful to yourself. You are expressing your praise, not receiving it. Subconsciously you are recognizing God and you are really praying.

Some tragedy comes into our lives. Our first reaction is one of rebellion. We say, “It isn’t fair—I resent this happening—I don’t deserve it.” But whom are we speaking to? Not to the four walls of our house for they can’t hear what we say. Though we may express our thoughts to some friend, we are not really talking to that person. He or she did not cause the tragedy. We are aware of the Power beyond human power that

Sometimes we feel ashamed of ourselves. Are we ashamed because somebody has found us out? That may be the case, but many times we feel shame when we know we will never be found out. Those who are the closest to us will never know, yet still we feel shame. Why? Because we know it is known. Known by whom? By ourselves? Yes, but also known by Someone else and that Someone is God. God has a way of breaking in upon our lives and making Himself felt.

The beginning of power is consciously opening our minds to God and being receptive to His presence, His Spirit, His voice, and His will. Jesus said, “[Some people] think that they shall be heard for their much speaking,” but He points out, “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before you ask Him.” The object of prayer is not telling God a lot of things. First, said Jesus, pray, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”

Really praying those words accomplishes what Whittier had in mind when he prayed:

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

When a person prays with his mind centered on God, two results follow. First, our prayers are positive instead of negative. Time and again some person has said to me, “I prayed but it didn’t help.” The fact is that often when we pray about some habit, some temptation, some weakness, or some need, it does real harm to us.

For example, here is one who is sick and prays to get well. This one says: “Lord, I am very sick.” The Lord may answer,

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know. Feel my brow and you'll know I have a temperature. Feel my pulse—see how weak it is. Lord, I don't feel like sitting up, anything I eat nauseates me, everything gets on my nerves. Oh yes, Lord, I am sick. Make me well and give me health."

That sort of praying will make even a well person sick. Certainly it won't make a sick person well. The same thing applies to some harmful habit of your life. The more earnestly you pray about it, the more firmly it becomes fixed in your thinking. But when one begins with God, instead of concentrating on his problems he fills his mind with God's power; instead of our sins we see His salvation; instead of our fears in life we find strength through our faith in Him.

Second, when God is the center of our prayer, then we pray without becoming discouraged. The reason we get discouraged is that we lose hope and the reason we lose hope is because we lose God. The Bible says, "Hope thou in God." God has the wisdom to solve every problem, He has the power to win every victory.

Study the Twenty-third Psalm, the finest example of prayer in the Old Testament. There we have nine petitions centering on the character and activity of God. David had problems and weaknesses in his own life. He lived in a world that sometimes looked dark, but in his prayer he is positive. He affirms the existence of God and feels His presence. Then David closes that prayer with two conclusions: First, tomorrow will be good—"Goodness and mercy shall follow me," he says. Second, beyond tomorrow will also be good—for he will be in "the house of the Lord."

Read again the Lord's Prayer. It begins with God and then it looks out on life with optimistic faith. It believes God's Kingdom can come; that our daily physical needs can be met; that our sins can be forgiven; that we can have strength for

Bishop Arthur J. Moore tells of a man who jumped to his death from the window of a high building. Commenting on that man, the old janitor of the building, who knew the man, said, “When a man has lost God, there ain’t nothing to do but jump.” But as long as one has God, there is always something else to do. No matter how bad yesterday may have been or today is, with God there is a good tomorrow ahead.

And the first purpose of prayer is to know God. It is as Tolstoy said, “To know God is to live.”

