



FORGIVE US OUR PRAYERS

THE SECRET OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER

JOHN A. HUFFMAN JR.





John Huffman is a husband, father of three daughters, and a pastor. He has served as pastor of the Key Biscayne Presbyterian Church in Florida, the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, and since 1978 has been the senior minister of the St Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California, a 4,700-member congregation. He has written nine books, numerous articles, and has traveled widely as a speaker and as a board member of WorldVision International, Christianity Today International, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His wife Anne is a psychoanalyst.





OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

YOUR KINGDOM COME

YOUR WILL BE DONE

ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD

FORGIVE US OUR PRAYERS

THE SECRET OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER

AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE

JOHN A. HUFFMAN JR.

CHRISTIAN FOCUS



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ISBN 1-84550-051-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Published in 2005
by
Christian Focus Publications Ltd.,
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,
IV20 1TW, Scotland, UK



www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Alister MacInnes

Printed and bound by
Norhaven, Denmark

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Teach us to Pray

'Lord, teach us to pray'

Luke 11:1



Prayer is basic to our spiritual survival. To stay spiritually healthy, we cannot afford to classify prayer as a low priority item. Discovering new insights about it from God's Word will help us to remember its importance.

All of us come to moments in our lives in which it is important for us to stop, reassess who we are, where we are going, and rediscover the importance of prayer. Although any point in life is a good time to stop and reassess, I'm struck by the appropriateness of doing so now. Some of us became quite self-confident as the stock market moved upward so fast in the 1990s. It was easy to develop a high-tech





The Lord's Prayer

approach to life, putting our confidence in how smart we were, how clever at picking stocks, and how secure our future would be as a result of our intelligence. But many of us discovered we weren't as smart as we thought we were when our portfolios were caught in the downturn. As a result, we have had to reassess who we are and where we put our trust.

In fact, we've gone from being overconfident to developing second-guessing as an art form. We are not certain what to trust anymore. We hear horrendous news reports of multinational companies collapsing, and we see how much of our reality can be put together with mirrors, making life appear to be what it really is not. We read stories of high-placed executives profiteering in their stock sales at the price of their employees and stockholders. Then we wonder what the next shock wave to hit our culture will be. We've already reeled in shock at the September 11 terrorists' attacks, the war in Iraq, elaborate budget surpluses that have now turned to deficits, and pension schemes that will provide only a fraction of what we expected in retirement. And it may be that your existential realities have come very close to home. They may involve reversals of health, the discovery that your husband is addicted to pornography, fears about the





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direction your child has chosen to move in life, or the failing health of an aging parent.

It is a good time to stop, reassess where we are, and either discover or rediscover how basic prayer is to our spiritual survival. For we must come at it time and time again, reminding ourselves of its importance, and discovering new insights about it from the Word of God. I invite you to identify with the disciples who specifically asked Jesus to teach them to pray. We will look at His response as it is embodied in what we call the Lord's Prayer, and other comments.

Why Don't we Pray More?

I am convinced that very few of us need to be told once again that we ought to pray. Manipulating people with this sense of 'oughtness' often ends up being counter-productive. However, let me put this question to you. Do you pray enough? I'm not telling you how much you should pray. I'm simply asking you whether or not, in your most honest moments, you have that sense of affirmation that comes from being 'prayed up'. Frankly, I have my own deficiencies in this area. I have to keep asking myself the question, Why do I not pray more? If we reflect on this long enough, I think we would probably come up with three main reasons why we do not pray enough.





The Lord's Prayer

Moral Difficulties.

We know that, on occasion, there are moral inequities in our lives that make it impossible to pray. The only way that we can break free into a vital prayer life is to make a decision. We have to choose between our self-will, which drives us into actions and attitudes that are against God's will for our lives, or choose to go his way. It is impossible to have a vital prayer life when our lives are caught up in unconfessed sin. We are called to either give up self or give up prayer. And sometimes we prefer to give up the latter.



Unbelief

At times I struggle with this in my own spiritual life. I have prayed often and intensely about specific needs in my life, and the lives of others, and have not had the answers for which I prayed. So my logical conclusion is, in very subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle ways, to back off from prayer in the self-protective, defensive mood of not wanting to have my hopes and dreams shattered. The lowering of expectations of God and disbelief in his promises can be convenient ways of getting both Him and me off the hook.

