

Climbing The Peak Of Prayer

Step One

You are a new (spiritually) young Christian. You've taken an Alpha Course and you now believe in Jesus, or you've met Him in some other way - maybe in quite a spectacular way. Your life has changed, you've joined the Church, and . . . What? You look around the Church, you listen, you watch, and you feel confused. Everyone seems to be different to you. They talk church-speak, they speak Holy Spirit-stuff, they all seem to be somewhere you aren't and you feel left out, left behind and, in some ways, worse than before you met Jesus! You feel cheated. You want to grow - but where to? How? What comes next? "Jesus, help me, I'm confused!"

OR

You have been a Christian since the year dot! You've read your Bible a dozen times, you've sung ALL the Hymns and choruses, you've heard ALL the sermons - and when it comes to the baptism in the Spirit, well, you've been there, done it and got the T shirt! Yet somehow you feel cheated. You want to grow - but where to? How? What comes next? "Lord, help me I'm drying up!"

Maybe you're neither of these extremes, maybe you're somewhere in the middle, but still long to go forward. If you are hungry to go forward, wherever you are spiritually, then Jesus is rubbing His hands in glee because you are just what He is looking and longing for.

This sounds great - but where to begin? Someone once asked Mother Teresa how she managed to feed, comfort and love the thousands of people who came to her for help - she answered, "One at a time"! The concept of "one at a time" is a good concept to embrace when we are seeking the 'Way' of God too. The Bible says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34 v 8). It doesn't say, "Take a great big mouthful, and get spiritual indigestion"! We humans tend to see the great big mountain of "religious living" in front of us and panic, we forget that we can climb it systematically step by step.

PRAYER is one of the peaks on that high mountain, and this too can be set about step by step. Jesus is in the business of dealing with mountains, and what might seem like an insurmountable challenge to us can become an exciting stroll in the countryside with our Lord by our side. The Christian walk (or **Way**, as it was originally called,) is supposed to be fun. It's the **JOY** of the Lord that's our strength, it's the **ABUNDANT** life that we are supposed to be living. If you have been given the impression that living with Jesus is full of misery and lifeless boredom, then the whole point has been missed. The Bible teaches that "in Him there is fullness of life" (Eph. 3 v 19 & Col 1 v 19), and that He wants us to enjoy the "length, breadth, height and depth of His love" (Eph 3 v 18) with power. Okay, we may have to face dangers, and we are going to have to exercise our spiritual muscles, but we are on a journey so there are bound to be difficulties; but they are like the problems any mountain climber faces, and the challenges are part of the fun. You'll never hear a mountain climber say that he enjoys his sport because it is easy and boring. No - he enjoys it because it stretches him, it is dangerous and he gets a kick out of it. Every time he climbs to some new horizon he gets a tremendous thrill, and sees a wonderful world from a new perspective.

Climbing the mountain peak of **PRAYER** carries the same kind of dangers and the same kind of thrills. In **PRAYER** as in climbing we make dreadful mistakes and fall flat on our faces; yet when we attain a particular vantage point we suddenly see ourselves and the world around us from a totally different perspective, and we know the climb was worth while. To reach that vantage point, though, we need to take things "one step at a time".

MAKING PREPARATION

As with an expedition to climb a mountain, a trek up the Peak of Prayer begins with preparation. The necessary equipment is a Bible, with nice thick paper so you can mark the texts that God speaks to you about: **a notebook and pencil**, this will be your personal journal: **a quiet place** where you can work undisturbed: and if possible **a friend/spouse/prayer-partner** to accompany you. Mountain climbing is always more fun with someone to share the experiences.

It is also necessary to ensure that your spiritual muscles are flexible before you begin. So many good intentions come to nothing because the daily discipline of Prayer proves too much. It is sensible to begin slowly and 'warm up' gradually, then the journey will not prove so arduous. It is also necessary to be really 'hungry' for the things of God. Half-hearted attempts to see God 'face to face' are doomed to failure. God promises, "If with all your heart you truly seek Me, you will surely find Me." - so begin by asking God to give you a healthy hunger. There are Bible passages that illustrate how men and women from years ago hungered after God. Their experiences can feed your hunger. Over the next month go through the following Scriptures. Use them to fire your imagination. **Psalms 42** reads,

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

Can you picture what it feels like to want God so much? Read the whole Psalm slowly, talking to God as you do, asking Him to make you as thirsty as the Psalmist. Jot down in your notebook the verses of this Psalm that mean the most to you, and then try to write out why.

Do the same over the next few weeks with the following Scriptures: -

Psalm 73 (particularly verses 25 and 26)
Ephesians Chap. 3 v 10 - 21.
Isaiah Chap 63 v 15 - Chap 64 v 12.

Take your time, thinking and 'chewing over' each passage in your mind. This kind of "meditation" will soften your heart and enable you to hear God speak to you more clearly. Try to talk through your thoughts with your prayer-partner, maybe you could actually meditate together.

Also, during the next month, write out a list of the difficulties you have over praying. Here are some of the reasons that people give to explain why they have stopped praying:

"I haven't got the time"
"other thoughts get in the way"
"the family won't leave me alone"
"What's the point, God never answers!"
"I'll start again when I feel more like it".
"God won't listen to me, I'm not good enough".
"whenever I try to pray, I fall asleep"

"I'm just no good at it"

I bet you can think of a whole lot more. Once you've got your own personal list, write another list of ways to help you combat your difficulties. Perhaps praying out loud will stop you from falling asleep. If time is short, try praying while you are doing something else, like the gardening or the ironing. Often actions speak louder than words. For instance, a mother can pray for her family while she is doing the ironing. Pray for Dad as you iron his shirt and for 'little Jimmy' as you wash and iron his nappies (okay I know none of you do this nowadays - but you know what I mean). Ask God's blessing on each member of the family as you make their bed, asking that God will give them a peaceful night's rest. Thank God for His provision as you prepare the meals, and appreciate the beauty of creation as you do the gardening. Pray for your family's protection from danger as you go to work each morning. I'm sure you men can use your imagination to create opportunities for prayer. Use the act of kissing goodbye, or shaking hands to be a silent prayer. Your touch (with anyone you meet) can always be a means of asking God to bless even a stranger whom you will never see again. Be inventive in your prayers.

John Wesley's mum had seventeen children and when she put her apron over her head they knew she was praying, and left her alone. She had no-where private to be with God, but created her own quiet space underneath her pinny. If she could find space and time to be with Jesus, then we most certainly can. Talk your difficulties over with your Prayer Partner or Cell Group, you'll find all sorts of imaginative solutions when you work together.

The important thing is that you have begun!

The Bible teaches that all God really wants from you and me is simply a humble attitude towards Him. Isaiah 57 v 15 reads,

"For this is what the high and lofty One says - He who lives for ever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly (or humble) in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly (humble) and to revive the heart of the contrite' "

As you come to Jesus, humbly and honestly seeking to know Him better, He will be only too pleased to help you do so.

So, **Step One** is - quite simply - to begin - to be determined that this is the first step in many that will take you to new horizons. Prepare quietly and gently for the adventure of climbing the Peak of Prayer Don't push yourself too hard, if you find that you've missed a day or two - well that's okay- you can always start again. 'Praying at all times' (as the Bible calls it) takes quite a time to become a habit, but with a little perseverance you will find that the joy of abiding continually in the presence of Jesus is so great that nothing can match it

Step two

If you have been doing all that was suggested in STEP ONE, that is - spending time with Jesus, praying for family and friends while going about your daily life and internally asking Him to bless those you shake hands with or have conversations with, then you have been learning to obey Jesus' command in John chapter 15. There Jesus taught us to "**abide**" in Him, or - as an old monk (Brother Lawrence) used to call it - "**Practising the Presence of Christ**". Your day has been full of Jesus, as well as all the other things you have had to do. This kind of "**abiding**" is an absolute necessity if we are to grow to the "full stature of Christ". No one can grow to be like someone else unless they spend much of their time with them.

In **STEP ONE** we also began to meditate on the Word of God when we used our journals to note down our thoughts as we read certain Scriptures. The whole point of

all this, though, was to prepare ourselves to begin to climb the Peak of Prayer, so where do we go from here?

If you practised these exercises in **STEP ONE**, then you have already been Scripture Praying without realising it. Here, though, is a more comprehensive understanding of what Scripture Praying is all about.

STEP TWO

Isn't it strange that you can get all fired up reading about PRAYER but the moment you get down to it something goes 'click' in your brain and your mind goes blank. You've got nothing to pray! Words simply won't come; your mind wanders off at a tangent and once again you feel that you are a failure!

Well, you are not alone. This has been happening to genuine seekers-after-God for generations. For generations, too, there has been a simple solution that has proved invaluable over the centuries. It is called "Scripture Praying" or "Praying the Scriptures".

PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES.

This is probably the most ancient and greatly revered practice of the saints of all the centuries past, a practice and a heritage that has been passed down through two millennia of the Christian faith. "Scripture Praying"=talking to Jesus by turning Scripture into prayer.

Approaching Jesus this way means:

- a) your mind will not wander
- b) you will not get sleepy
- c) you will know what to pray
- d) your prayers will be richer than those you have usually prayed, because you will be praying out God's Holy Word.

Seems almost too good to be true, doesn't it?

It's very simple though. All you do is use the Word of God to trigger off your prayer-time. You literally pray back to Jesus the words in the Bible, and then talk to Him about them; allowing your mind to dwell on those bits that seem to attract your attention.

- 1) Speak out loud! Talk to Jesus
- 2) Paraphrase or adapt. Let your heart lead, don't just stay with the verse if your spirit nudges you to deeper places in Him.
- 3) Talk to your Master in ordinary day to day English. Nothing too prosy or flowery - just how you would speak if He was sitting on the settee next to you.
- 4) If some thought jumps out of your spirit - turn that thought into words. Speak it out loud to Jesus.
- 5) Record the basics of this conversation in your Journal. Also record anything Jesus might say to you.

Scriptures to practice

Psalm 23 is probably the easiest to begin with, and this is how you might proceed: You read (aloud) - "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*" - and you begin to pray that back to Jesus, (again out loud, if that is possible) - "*Yes, Lord, you really are my shepherd. I can think of so many times in my life when You were there with me. There was the time . . .*" etc. etc., and you thank Him for what He has done.

OR

You might pray, *"Lord, I can't say that I know You as my shepherd. I've lived a life away from you for too long, so now please come into my life afresh and really become my Shepherd. I do so long to be in the place where I really don't 'want' for anything. But right now I'm so spiritually hungry that I long for you to feed me and supply my needs . . . "* etc. etc.

Then go on to verse 2 and do the same. You may get half-an-hours prayer out of one verse, but that's okay - you don't have to finish the whole psalm. It's simply there to give you direction in your praying.

When you have spent a week or so with Psalm 23, then try some of the following Scriptures.

Week Two - Ephesians 1 v 1 - 11

Week Three - Colossians 2 v 9 - end.

Seek out other Scriptures that can be prayed in this way. You will find those that are very Christ centred to be the easiest. Try the Lord's Prayer, (Luke chapter 11 v 2) or maybe some verses from John chapters 14 through to 16. Many of the Psalms can be Scripture prayed, and will prove a really great source of strength and comfort.

It is always a good idea to compare notes with your Prayer partner (or maybe with the other members of your Cell group) . This way you will be encouraged to think and pray on a wider scale. Always remember that the whole point of Prayer is to cement your relationship with the Lord Jesus, and to help you to hear what He wants to talk to you about.

Try to keep up your **'abiding'** prayers during your normal day ("abiding prayers" are what you learned in STEP ONE) then you may find that your **'Scripture Praying'** will open up new areas of prayer for your friends and family.

Go over the list of 'difficulties in prayer' that you made last month - you will probably be able to cross off some of those difficulties, for now you have found a way of solving them as you have spent time with Jesus.

Step three

Let's recap. Over the past few weeks you have begun to learn to ABIDE in Christ by praying throughout the day for family and friends. You have remembered them before God during your daily routine as certain duties have prompted you to do so. You have also spent time "Praying the Scriptures" back to Jesus, and have thus begun to meditate. You have, hopefully, been keeping notes in your Prayer Journal to remind you of what you have learned during your times of Prayer, and by so doing you have been in effect having a private Bible study. There you are - it's dead easy, isn't it!! And you thought that Prayer Journals and personal Bible Study, and "praying without ceasing" was beyond your capabilities. Isn't it sad when church jargon makes an easy task sound so super spiritual that it scares people away?

You have now arrived at the 'First Camp' on your trek up the Peak of Prayer with no broken bones and all your spiritual enthusiasm still intact - I hope! Enjoy the view! Recognise that you and Jesus are getting much better acquainted! Spend some time simply sitting here in His presence and begin to experience His loving appreciation of all that you are. Hand over to Jesus any difficulties or problems you are facing either in your daily life or in your climb up the Peak of Prayer. A tried and tested method of

praying this way is to sit with your hands - palms down - on your knees and imagine all your worries etc. dripping out of your palms. When you have released all those negatives into Jesus' arms, turn your hands palms up - and receive all the peace, love and grace that He wants to give you. You are now ready to begin STEP THREE.

STEP THREE

Your goal on this part of your journey is to understand who you really are as a Christian. The Bible teaches that you are a **"new creation in Christ Jesus"**. It's a phrase that slips easily off the tongue - but what does it really mean? Come with me slowly and gently up these next few slopes on the Peak of Prayer and you will begin to understand the wonder of being a "new creation".

Over the past weeks you have been **"Praying the Scriptures"** back to Jesus. You have been using them to talk to Him about your life and your relationship to Him. It has been a time for you to get personally involved with Christ. You have been applying the Scriptures to your life and thanking God for the experience. Now you are going to shift your vantage point - you are going to try to pray Scripture as an observer not a participator. This time, as you pray, you will be watching the fellowship, the relationship, between God (the Father), and Jesus (the Son).

You are going to have to use your imagination. This will be easier for some than it is for others. We are all very different, and some people find using their imagination very difficult indeed. Don't let this worry you, simply ask the Holy Spirit to stimulate your imagination as you read.

This month you are going to read through Mark's Gospel. This Gospel is quite a short one, and is vivid in its description of events so is very conducive to this kind of "Scripture Praying". As you read, follow Jesus as He travelled through Palestine. Watch Him as He heals and ministers to the people around Him. (I said you'd need your imagination). Try to become a "fly on the wall", as it were, observing His reactions to the world He lives in. Try to feel the wind on your face as you follow him around Palestine; listen to the waves on the shore of Galilee; hear the voices of the crowds that follow Him; watch the excitement of those who are healed. More than this - watch Jesus! Try to analyse His relationship to the Father.

How does Jesus relate to the Father?

How does the Father relate to His Son?

What part (if any) does the Father play in the miracles that Jesus performs?

How much is the Father committed to the world that Jesus inhabits?

Is the Father just a "watcher" like you, or is He intimately involved with every thing that Jesus does?

How is He involved?

What is His part in Jesus' life?

As you read and watch the interplay between Father and Son write down your answers to the above questions. Really begin to analyse this primary relationship.

Begin to pray out your conclusions. Perhaps you have just read about Jesus' baptism by John in the River Jordan, when the heavens parted and the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus like a dove, and the Father spoke from heaven saying, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Your prayers might go something like this:-

"Lord God, heavenly Father, You were so pleased with Jesus at His baptism. You were just like a proud human father at his child's exam awards. How you must have been overjoyed at His implicit obedience as He began to dare to reach out with healing and help to all those around Him. What was it that pleased You so much? Was it His obedience? Or was it simply that He was Your Son and You loved Him so dearly?"

Notice that you are not part of the prayer, you have become a "watcher", an "observer", you have changed your vantage point. Go slowly right through Mark's Gospel, watching the interchange, the caring, the loving, and the relationship that goes on between the Father and the Son.

Do this several times during the first week or so (working slowly through as much of Mark's Gospel as possible), always spending time quietly before the Lord before you begin, ridding yourself of any negatives and problems that you might be having, and filling yourself with all that Jesus has to offer you. At the end of the first week try to meet up with someone - perhaps your prayer partner or someone in your Cell group - and one of you take one particular incident in Jesus' life, and then the other one take another. Discuss together what you have discovered about the relationship between the Father and the Son.

As you proceed in your "Scripture Praying" take a really good look at the Transfiguration (Mark chapter 9) and Passion week (Mark 10 v 32 through to the end) Remember you are an "observer". You are watching this all take place, and you are particularly interested in how Jesus and His Father relate to each other during these traumatic days.

Mark 9 describes the Transfiguration. Was this the first time that it happened to Jesus do you suppose, or was this normal for Him when He prayed alone to the Father? Could it be that, on this occasion, He simply allowed the disciples to become "observers" of His bond with His Father - "observers" - just as you are trying to be?

Where did Jesus get His strength to passively discuss His coming crucifixion in Mark 10 v 32 & verses following? How did He know so much about the future? Where did Jesus get His power to heal Bartimaeus and others? Listen to Jesus' confidence in the future in Mark 13. Where does this confidence come from? Is it in His own ability to foretell the future, or is it centred on His knowledge of the Father?

Watch Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14). Remember the disciples were asleep for most of Jesus' agony, they only heard snippets of His conversation with His Father. Pray to the Father about this. Ask Him to open your spiritual eyes to why this very intimate time is recorded as it is.

Then follow Jesus all the way to the Cross. Experience the whole episode! Smell the crowds, taste the fear and hate. Watch Jesus die for you!

How do you think God the Father was reacting in heaven?
What was His part in our salvation?
What does all this teach you about the Holy God you worship?

These Scriptures should raise so many fascinating questions that your Prayer Journals should be almost full by the time you have gone right through Mark's Gospel. Spend time discussing your conclusions with someone else, pray together, pray for each other, thank God for His relationship to His Son our Saviour.

This form of praying is discussed in "The Secret to the Christian Life" by Gene Edwards. I recommend reading "The Normal Christian Life" by Watchman Nee.

Step four

How are you getting along? In the last Prayer Leaflet we decided that the goal on this part of our journey up the mountain peak of Prayer was to discover what it means to be a "new creation in Christ Jesus". We are by no means there yet, but we have set our sights on the horizon and are making good time.

In **STEP THREE** you really worked hard using your imagination to analyse the relationship that existed between God the Father and His Son, Jesus. You will by now have discovered that their fellowship together was very, very close. God the Father was as intimately involved with the life of His Son on earth as it was possible to be. In fact their relationship was infinitely closer than that of a human father and son.

Before you take the next step, why not spend a little time quietly meditating and seeking the tangible presence of God. Here is what is known as the **5p Meditation** - because each part can be described by the letter P.

(1) PAUSE

Let yourself relax. Feel the tension going out of your body. Make room for God. Breathe slowly and deeply and KNOW that God offers you His peace. Let go and let God.

(2) PRESENCE

Know that God is with you. This is the main purpose of the meditation - to discover that in Him you live and move and have your being. Pray: -

*You Lord are in this place
Your Presence fills it
Your Presence is Peace.*

*You Lord are in my heart
Your Presence fills it
Your Presence is Peace*

(3) PICTURE

Picture the scene from Psalm 42 1 - 2. You know this Psalm from STEP ONE: -

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

See yourself seeking and finding Him. Picture yourself coming through the desert to be refreshed by Jesus.

(4) PONDER

How long do you think that you can survive without water? How long do you think you can survive without God? Think about the dry and arid areas of your life, the things that worry you, and know that God is your strength and refreshment.

5) PROMISE

Promise yourself that you will often seek Him out, and that, if any dry or arid times

turn up during your week, you will especially call upon Him.

STEP FOUR

Having meditated, and quietly put yourself before God, you are now ready for **STEP FOUR**.

We have prayed the Scriptures in two ways, so far. Initially you prayed applying the Scriptures to yourself, then you became an "observer" watching how God, the Father, related to Jesus of Nazareth. You saw Him caring for His Son, proudly praising and encouraging Jesus. You discovered that God the Father was as intimately involved with Jesus' life and the people He related to as Jesus was Himself.

In **STEP FOUR** you are still a "watcher" observing Jesus of Nazareth as He lived and breathed here on earth, but this time you are going to try to "see" things through His eyes.

Begin by asking Jesus to help you; love Him, and receive His love in return. Open up your imagination and visualise the interaction between Jesus of Nazareth and God in heaven. I make a point of calling Him, Jesus of Nazareth, because nowadays He is no longer simply Jesus of Nazareth, He is now the Risen and Eternal Son and as such He is no longer subject to the limitations of the Carpenter in Palestine. You are I am subject to limitations, and that is why it is of such help to us to understand this relationship while Jesus was here on earth.

This time I suggest you use the Scripture in John's Gospel.

John chapter 2.

John chapter 3 v 22 - 36.

John chapter 5.

John chapter 6 v 16 - end.

John chapter 7 v 14 - 30.

John chapter 8.

John chapter 10 v 22 - 42.

John chapter 12 v 20 - 36.

Pray these Scriptures, just as you did before, as an observer.

Discover how Jesus saw His relationship with His Father.

Pray out loud your awareness of His obedience, and of His understanding that ALL that He accomplished was, in fact, only that which His Father was doing. Speak to Jesus about it, write your own comments and observations in your Prayer Journal.

Try to spend time with your Prayer Partner or Cell Group discussing your discoveries and understandings.

Try to "get under the skin" on that loving, caring relationship that existed between Jesus of Nazareth and His Father in heaven.

I know that this may all seem quite hard work, but if you really want to grow in the Christian Faith; if your greatest desire is to know your Lord and God more, and to love Him with all your heart; then you will find yourself thirsting for more opportunities to spend time with Him, rather than wishing that you didn't have to work so hard. My prayer is that your prayer-time will become such a joyful and exciting part of your life, that you will be demanding more of Him day by day.

Step five

You have had a lot to do this past month, and by now you may be finding the going a bit tough. Maybe you have even given up on your climb up the Mountain of Prayer.

Never mind, if you have found it difficult, why not go back a few steps and start again. After all these leaflets are to help you, not to put you under

All this time we have been watching the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and His Father in heaven. You will have seen that God, the Father, was as much a part of the life of the Carpenter of Nazareth as Jesus was Himself. The Father was there, intimately involved, when Jesus walked on the water, He was there when a withered hand was restored, He was there involved in Jesus' pain when Peter denied Him. In fact the Father was totally committed to the life that Jesus lived here on earth.

Jesus didn't have to strain and force Himself to do the things He did; He was simply obedient to the voice of His Father. Look at **John chapter 11** that records the death and raising of Lazarus.

Listen to Jesus' prayer in verse 41 -

"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

It was only after He knew that God had raised Lazarus from the dead that He called out "Lazarus, come out!" Jesus had no problems hearing and obeying His Father because Jesus HAD AN INDWELLING LORD. By this I mean that Jesus had the tangible Presence of His Father dwelling within Him, God was 'abiding' in Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth was never ever alone. Never, that is until that dreadful day on the cross when He cried out *"My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me!"*

Jesus of Nazareth simply lived out the life of His Father within Him. To put this another way - God the Father lived within Jesus of Nazareth, therefore the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth were the deeds of God the Father.

Where does that leave you and me? Let's find out. . .

STEP FIVE

We are now going to pray some more Scriptures from John's Gospel.

Using **John chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17**, begin to pray, no longer as an observer but, as a petitioner. Remember you are changing your position again. You are now praying once again for yourself. You are not simply watching and observing, you are praying as a petitioner, for yourself.

Your petition is to ask Jesus - **Christ the Eternal Son** - to show you your position in Him. Remember, Jesus is no longer simply Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, He is now Jesus Christ, the Risen and Enthroned Eternal Son of the Father. He has power and authority way beyond anything that He had when He walked this earth. The Bible teaches that when He lived here 2,000 years ago, He laid aside all the power and majesty that He had when in heaven, so that He could live life in the same way that we have to. Now, though, He is once again in Highest Heaven and is our Lord and King.

So - you read a Scripture like John 15 v 16 that teaches that Jesus has chosen you, and your prayers might sound like this: -

"Jesus, is it really true that You have chosen me? Is it really true that You have sent me even as the Father sent You? I can hardly believe it! Is it really true that I can have all the support and commitment from the Holy Spirit that You received from the Father? Please make this a reality in my life . . . Etc. etc."

Although this Scripture praying may prove to be a very personal time, try, if you

possibly can, to précis your discoveries in your Prayer Journal, and to share them with someone else.

CONCLUSION - I am a "new creation".

We are not supposed to live our lives straining to become good "Christians". God the Father is the only Person Who ever possessed a 'life' acceptable to Him. Jesus came to show us how to be 'possessed' by the perfect life of God, thereby living and revealing His life to the world around us. We are fools if we try to do what we are simply incapable of doing..

The "Christian life" is really Divine Life lived out within a human frame. Jesus told us to be *"perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"*!! Now - I can't do that! I don't know about you, but I can't just "be perfect" simply because God is perfect. I can try. My deepest intention daily is to emulate my God, but daily I am convinced that I can't do it.

I am relieved to learn that Jesus of Nazareth couldn't do it either! John 5 v 30 reads, *"By Myself I can do nothing!"* Again in verse 19 Jesus says, *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."* So, that means that, by Himself, even Jesus of Nazareth couldn't live the perfect life. So where does that leave you and me?

What we need to know is how then did Jesus of Nazareth lead a life that was perfectly sinless? How did Jesus of Nazareth manage to go through life never having to apologise for anything He did or said? If it was because He was the Son of God, then He was cheating - because I am only a fallen sinful human being and cannot copy Him. But we have learned that while He lived a life here on earth, (and was tempted in exactly the same way that you and I are,) He lived that life by the power of the Father Himself. Jesus of Nazareth did nothing "of Himself", but allowed the INDWELLING LORD of His life to live in Him. Where, though, does that leave me? Listen to Jesus praying to His Father in John 17: -

"My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me . . . that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them."

Do you hear that? If you have given your life to Jesus, and been born again, then you too have an INDWELLING LORD. The very life of God that Jesus lived while here on earth, He is prepared to live right now in you. When you were BORN AGAIN you were re-created in Christ Jesus. You are now a NEW CREATION IN CHRIST JESUS. Really take this on board. You are no longer 'homo sapiens', you are no longer a human being, you are a "new creation in Christ Jesus". The Greek translates this Scripture as a "new species".

John chapter 1v11 teaches us that: -

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, BUT OF GOD."

You are a child of God! A child of God has a power and a life available to him that no ordinary human being has. You have, within you, the life-force of the Holy Spirit. If only we can truly take this to heart, we will begin to understand what Paul meant when he wrote - "I can do all things through Christ Jesus my Lord". We have not been left to try to live good Christian lives - we have the INDWELLING LIFE OF GOD to live the Divine life of perfection in us, corporately and individually. WOW!

I'll leave you to really think this through, and next time we will explore this concept a little more. Pray carefully and thoroughly through the Scriptures in this leaflet. Daily seeking Jesus, that He might truly implant these truths in your heart and life.

Step six

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

In Step Five we began to discuss the concept of being "a new creation in Christ Jesus". We ended with the thought of having an "INDWELLING LORD" Who could live the Divine Life of God within us. We said that being a "new creation" in the Greek meant that we are a "**new species**". No longer homo sapiens, but a new kind of human being. No longer children of Adam – we now have the power to become "**Sons of God**" - **John chapter 1**.

This is the **Pearl of Great Price** that can – quite simply – change your concept of the Christian life completely. Why not, at this point, read the parable of the Pearl of Great Price. You will find it in **Matthew Chapter 13 verse 44 – 46**. It is a tiny parable and is tucked away between several others that teach us about the Kingdom of God. I want us, though, to simply concentrate on this tiny parable and to compare it with **Philippians chapter 3 verses 7 – 11**. In both these passages of Scripture you will find men who are prepared to discard EVERYTHING – literally EVERYTHING – for the priceless privilege of obtaining that wonderful, glorious opportunity of having an INDWELLING LORD.

I have long since adopted as my personal logo the little picture reproduced above of a pearl in a shell to constantly remind me that I have, within me, a pearl of great price – and that pearl is the eternal Presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. I need to remind myself frequently of this fact, as I can so easily let my relationship to Jesus slip to the back of my mind. Daily reminding myself that I "am not my own, I have been bought with a price."

(**1 Cor. 7 v 23**) confirms my assurance that Jesus really does live in me. Can you say the same with absolute assurance? Why not use these two passages to help you to ask Jesus to give you the absolute confidence that He lives in you too. Use these Scriptures in your prayer time over the **next two weeks or so**. If possible try to get hold of the Amplified Translation of **Philippians chapter 3**, as it really underlines the yearnings of Paul as he seeks to take hold of this huge concept.

Paul, though, is seeking something even greater than simply the constant presence of the Holy Spirit within him. He is seeking to 'know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings,' This word 'know' in the Greek has a far deeper meaning than when we use it. It means having a true and really deep understanding of the whole concept of what being possessed by Christ really entails. Now, if Paul struggled with this, then perhaps we should be satisfied, at this point, with simply concentrating on the fact of having the Holy Spirit within us, and thus becoming "**new creations in Christ Jesus**". Perhaps later we can explore Paul's "deeper" meaning.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE CONCEPT OF BEING A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST JESUS.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 14 ff reads: -

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we

regard no-one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: . . "

Spend some time praying this Scripture through. Ponder it carefully in your heart. What is our Father God trying to tell us through it? It clearly states that "All this is from God"! So there is something here that needs to be taken deeply to heart.

It clearly says that we must not regard these things from a worldly point of view. Why? Because Christ died for us, and therefore we died too! From a worldly point of view this statement is stupid, but from God's point of view it is critical. And if we died 'in Christ Jesus', then we must now live 'in Him'. If we are dead, though, how can we live? We now live by the power of the life of Jesus Christ, and because of that we are no longer what we were before we became Christians, we are now a "new creation in Christ Jesus". Before we gave ourselves to Jesus – before we became "slaves to Christ" we were simply ordinary human beings (homo sapiens); now that we have been "crucified in Christ" we (homo sapiens) must be dead! But we have also been "raised with Christ"! What then was "raised"? Merely another human being, another homo sapiens? No! We have been raised as Children of God! A "new creation in Christ Jesus". As different from homo sapiens as a human being is from a chimpanzee!

Paul spells this out again in Galatians chapter 2 v 20 – 21: -

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Paul is saying that he has an INDWELLING LORD Who lives his (Paul's) life for (and in) him. Isn't this exactly what Jesus said when He stated that He was 'in' the Father, and the Father was 'in' Him? We read about that in John chapter 17 in the last leaflet.

So Paul is saying that he has exactly the same benefits in his life that Jesus of Nazareth had in His. Jesus of Nazareth had the indwelling Life of the Father – the Divine Life – living in Him. And now Paul states that he too has the Divine Life living within him, though this eternal Life in Paul comes through the energy of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. Can you see why we prayed those Scriptures from Jesus' viewpoint? When you used your imagination and read the chapters in John's Gospel (Step Four), 'watching' Jesus relate to His Father, you were learning how you too can relate to the Holy Spirit of Jesus – your Indwelling Lord! **Our relationship with Jesus is supposed to be identical to Jesus' relationship with His Father.** If and when it does become the same, then we too can expect to receive all the benefits that the Apostle Paul experienced. You and I are no different from the Apostle Paul. God loves all of His children to the same extent, and equips us all with the same benefits and powers. So, if Paul was a new creation in Christ Jesus because of the Divine Life of the Holy Spirit within him, then you and I are new creations too; and you and I have the Divine Life of God living and functioning within us. I know – it's simply unbelievable isn't it? Can you believe it? You are no longer simply an ordinary human being. You are a new creation. You are a receptacle of the Divine Life of God Himself! You have power and love and life available to you that no ordinary human being has! You have, within you, the power to live a life as wonderful as the apostles of old! You even have, within you, the power to live a life as glorious as the one Jesus of Nazareth lived when He was here on earth!! How about that!!

"Get away with you – you're barmy", I can hear you say. "There's no way that I can live like Jesus did. I am forever making all sorts of terrible mistakes. I am forever apologising to God for the horrible things I do. I am forever wishing I'd kept my big mouth shut! How can you say that I have the Life of God within me! If I did I wouldn't be making such a mess of things would I? Surely you don't expect any of us to live like Jesus did – and anyway you don't manage it yourself, so why imply that the rest

of us can!"

I agree with you. I don't manage to live that way – YET – but, like Paul, I keep pressing on towards a goal that I know Jesus has ready for me. I also take very seriously what Jesus said, (Read John 14 v 11ff)*

"Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

Does Jesus tell fibs? No – of course He doesn't! That means that all these wonderful promises are quite possible even for stupid sinners, like you and me. The trouble is we have great difficulty getting our 'SELVES' out of the way. We'll discuss this prayerfully in the next Leaflet.

For now though, pray carefully through the Scriptures in this prayer leaflet, and really try to get a grip on what God is saying to you through them. Begin to 'see' yourself as different from the 'you' that you were before you were born again into Christ Jesus. Begin to recognise that there is nothing that God has promised in His Word that is impossible for Him to accomplish in you.

Remember that Pearl of Great Price that you would sell everything to attain, and remember too that YOU are the Pearl of Great Price that Jesus was prepared to give up everything for!! **If He was prepared to die for you, surely you can believe that He is longing to live in you! It stands to reason that He must have had a purpose in all that He did, and the Bible teaches that that purpose was to bring "many sons to glory". Welcome to the glorious heritage of the new-born, newly created, sons of God.**

- f or ff after a verse simply means "1 verse or several verses following".

Step seven

The "I" that looms so large!

At the end of **STEP SIX** we said, "The trouble is we have great difficulty getting our SELVES out of the way" when we live our lives. We discovered that as "new creations in Christ Jesus" we have the same Divine Life available to us that Jesus had when He walked this earth. Somehow, though, we have not fully grasped this glorious fact; and anyway even if we have we find it so hard to "deny SELF" and allow Jesus to live His life within us.

This business of "denying SELF" was something that Jesus insisted on. Do you remember – in Matthew 16 v 24ff Jesus taught His disciples, *"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it."* Again in John chapter 15 He said something very like it, *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."* **(It would be a good idea if, at this point, you spent several prayer times praying through these Scriptures, finding out just what Jesus is saying to you personally through them.)**

Getting our SELVES out of the way, so that Jesus can live His life in us is something that takes the rest of our lives to master. We can, though, use some simple techniques to help with this. Choose a short phrase, sentence or Scripture text – one that is comfortable and familiar to you – and use it to infiltrate your spirit all day long. For example: -

I sometimes use the word, MARANATHA, it is an ancient expression used by the early Christians and means "Come, Lord Jesus". Couple this with: "Lord Jesus, live out your life in me", and you have an excellent "spirit infiltrator" (if there is such an expression). All day long, whilst doing everyday chores and tasks, I repeat my "spirit infiltrator". *"MARANATHA, LORD JESUS, LIVE OUT YOUR LIFE IN ME"*. Again and again, over and over, day after day; until finally I find that the sentence is part of my inner being. I will, involuntarily, wake up saying it, or I find myself repeating it in my subconscious, - it has become part of my very being. As my spirit absorbs this prayer, so I pray that Jesus will begin to answer it, and that I might find that my reactions to the world around me will quietly and secretly change.

Maybe you would find it much better to adopt a particular chorus or hymn. For example: - "Jesus, be the centre, Be my source, be my light, Jesus". Or "Lord, I come to You, let my heart be changed, renewed, " etc. etc. Sing your chosen chorus over and over again inside your head, let it sink deep into your spirit and you will find yourself singing even while you are talking or working or driving the car. Jesus is taking the words of the song and answering the prayer that they contain. Of course, you have to really mean the words that you sing or pray. Jesus only answers prayers that are truly sincere. You cannot ask Him to rid you of your "SELF" and then blithely go on as though you had never prayed anything at all.

If you look in the Church Notice sheet, inside page, top left, you will find a ready-made text provided week after week. As I write this, on January 6th 2002, the text reads, *"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"* Are my feet beautiful? Do I proclaim peace? Do I bring good tidings and proclaim salvation? Does my life shout aloud that God reigns? Here's a text that needs to be prayed into my life!

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

So, I am beginning to understand that I truly am a Child of God! Jesus is taking those "spirit infiltrator" prayers and is answering them in my life. I may not be 'there' yet, but I accept BY FAITH that He will do what He has promised. Where, then, does my prayer life go from here? Have I reached the high peaks of the mountains of prayer? It certainly doesn't feel like it. The Bible speaks of skipping on the mountaintops with "hinds feet". Well, my spiritual feet still feel very earth-bound. What comes next?

We have been concentrating primarily on our own personal walk with Jesus throughout these leaflets. All the prayer-exercises that we have practised so far have been aimed at establishing a close and valuable relationship between our inner spirits and the Indwelling Lord of our life. In order to make that relationship concrete and fruitful we need to begin to look outside ourselves during our times with Jesus.

There are several paths to follow up the Mountain of Prayer; we will begin to look at two of them.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE and INTERCESSION.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE. This entails us fighting, in prayer, against Satan's attacks on ourselves, our friends or indeed on anyone. We are protecting and defending a person or position in Christ. We also go on the attack against any possible assault that the enemy might have in a given situation. The Bible describes it as coming against the Strongholds of Satan. We learn God's promises, and claim them in Jesus'

Name. We 'see' a need and we 'fight' for it!

INTERCESSION. Although many people seem to bracket the two forms of prayer together, **Intercession** is very different to **Spiritual Warfare**. As we Intercede we stand between God and someone who needs Him; holding hands with both the person and Jesus and bringing them together in love. To truly intercede means that we must become totally unselfish in our praying. Seeking to feel and understand the deepest longings of the person for whom we pray. Our aim is to pray the prayers that person would pray if they knew God for themselves, or if they were in a better position and able to pray for themselves. Frequently, intercessory prayers may not be the prayers that you would choose to pray yourself. Intercessory Prayer is completely 'self' denying.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is forever "making Intercession for us". He can do this because He knows what it feels like to be a human being. He can truly empathise with us and our situation. We must learn to do the same if we are to become fruitful Intercessors. We must learn to empathise with those for whom we pray .

Seek God about your ministry in prayer. Are you a 'warrior' or an 'intercessor'? Very probably He will want you to use both forms of prayer at some time or other, but it is likely that your spirit will 'warm' in one particular direction. Now is the time to ask Him what He wants of you – His "new creation in Christ Jesus"!

We will look at these two kinds of prayer in following Leaflets.

Step eight

By now you should have come to the wondrous understanding that, as a born-again child of God, you have all the resources of an "Indwelling Lord". I am sure I could write a book about the glorious implications of being adopted into the family of God. I promise I won't do that here, but for now rest awhile on this high plateau of the Mountain of Prayer and lay back into the truths and benefits of your position in Christ,

Listen to His voice telling you that: -

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. (John 15 v 16)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body. (1 Co. 6:19,20)

If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. (John 14: 14-17)

As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love. (John 15: 9,10)

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. (John 16 : 13-25)

Meditate on these truths; let them become a part of your inner being.

Remember God's Word says that you were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians chapter 1 v 4ff).

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves."

Where does that thought take you? It leads me to believe that the world was actually created for my benefit and for yours!

Think – if Jesus, the Lamb, was slain before everything was called into being (see Revelation 13:8), then the world was created to enable that sacrifice to take place. If the sacrifice was for you and me then so was the creation of all things! Mind boggling, isn't it? And you were chosen in Christ – that sacrifice – before the foundation of the world!

Let your imagination run riot, for Scripture says, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Cor. 2:9)

The most wonderful Father you could ever imagine – is yours!
The most powerful friend, the most all-conquering protector – is yours!
The most patient and loving husband (spouse) - is yours!
The most glorious King of all eternity – is not only yours, but you are HIS!

This Being, this infinite God actually dwells within you – and you live and breathe and have your being in Him. How can you ever be the same again?

Get out your Bible, get out your Journal and spend as many days as you need contemplating the overwhelming privilege that is yours as a new creation in Christ Jesus. No wonder we sing His praise! No wonder we sing "Thank You Jesus, for loving me"! No wonder we run out of words as we try to tell Him how much we love and appreciate Him!

This plateau on the Mountain of Prayer that I shall call – "The Place of Knowing Who I am in Him: the Place of Refreshment" - is one that you will need to return to again and again. No matter how high you climb up the Mountain of Prayer this "Place" follows you, and is always there for the times when you need to be refreshed. Like the Rock that produced Living Water during the Exodus which followed the Children of Israel through the desert, this "Place of Refreshment" will follow you on your pilgrimage too (*. . . For they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. [1 Cor:10; 4]*)

When things get tough and the going is hard, simply return to the knowledge of who you are in Christ Jesus, and refresh yourself in the Scriptures that reveal His promises. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus", recognise that He is your Indwelling Lord and receive from Him the Life giving Waters from Heaven.

But we can't stay here forever. Not this side of Eternity anyway. We must continue our climb, and the next **Peak** is the **Peak of Intercession**.

USING THE "LORDS' PRAYER" as a pattern for INTERCESSION.

Let's begin in the same way that Jesus taught His disciples – with what we call "**The Lord's Prayer**". When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray He gave them a 'pattern of prayer' - "The Lord's Prayer". This 'pattern' can be divided into two parts, the first part turns our minds godward; and the second part encourages us to look around us.

GODWARD

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name".

Jesus encourages us to 'see' God the Father as our HEAVENLY Father. Someone Who is nothing at all like us. A Being outside of our understanding, huge, vast, powerful enough to have created aeons of time and space. Someone so unlike frail humanity that we can never truly comprehend Him with our limited understanding. Because He is so wonderful He is also totally reliable, absolutely trustworthy, gloriously dependable. If Jesus had told us to think of God the Father like a human father we would have had a sad and distorted picture of Him. No – this is our Heavenly Father, Someone Who is even greater than the most wonderful parent we could ever imagine.

"Hallowed be Thy Name".

No wonder we are told to "hallow" His Name. To set His Name apart and to recognise that it is HOLY – different from any other Name.

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

Here Jesus tells us to get ourselves to the place where we truly want what God our Heavenly Father wants. To align, as it were, our minds with His mind. To recognise that this wonderfully dependable Father really and truly knows what is best for us and for those we pray for.

We are also told to pray that "His Kingdom will come", a heartfelt request for Jesus' Second Coming. Do you pray regularly that Jesus will "Come again"?

PRAYERS FOR ALL ON EARTH.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Here is where we begin our Intercessions. Our 'daily bread' is everything we might need to live the life that Jesus wants us to. And as this 'prayer pattern' is in the plural, this means that we can ask for those around us too.

"..and forgive us our trespasses"

The word 'and' connects this sentence to the last – so we need DAILY to ask that our Father will forgive us for those things that we have done wrong. Try Scripture praying Psalm 19 verses 12 – 14 as you confess.

"As we forgive those who trespass against us."

A time for reflection. Have I any resentment against anyone? Is there anyone that I have turned away from in anger and refused to forgive? Now is the time to release that unforgiveness, and clear the way for God to forgive me my sins.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

God, our Heavenly Father never leads us into temptation, (James 1 v 13), yet here Jesus teaches us to say "lead us not into temptation", what do you think He means? Could it be that we can wander into wrongdoing because we are not centred on Him? We also pray that He will deliver us from evil (or 'the evil one'), this matches what Jesus prayed for in John 17 verse 15. As we pray this for ourselves we can also intercede for others in the same way.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory for ever...."

We are back to recognising Who it is we are praying to. Because we know that His really is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory we are confident that He can take all that we pray and cause His perfect Will to come about.

Use the "Lord's Prayer" as a pattern for your INTERCESSIONS over the next few weeks. Remember to intersperse your intercessions with times of meditation and reflection on who you are in Christ Jesus – a totally new creation. As you do this meditate on the Scriptures at the beginning of this leaflet.

Step nine

INTERCESSION

If you have ever prayed for your family, or for someone who is unwell or in trouble, then you already know how to **INTERCEDE**. Intercession is as normal to a Child of God as chatting on the phone is to a teenage girl! As Children of God we automatically care enough for people to want the best for them, and we know that the only One who can be the best is Jesus – so we intercede between them and Him. Intercession is simply the act of holding the hand of the one we pray for and holding Jesus' hand - and bringing the two together,

The trouble is that, sometimes, we pray and pray and eventually run out of ways of saying what we want to pray. Our concerns are still there, but somehow our ability to articulate them seems to have dispersed into thin air. Or you may have found that your prayers leave your mouth and then simply bump into the ceiling and seem to get nowhere. Everyone who has ever prayed will say they have felt the same! That's exactly how so many of us muddle along year after year. But that need not be the case, Jesus wants us to learn from Him how to make our prayer-life interesting, stimulating and – best of all – fruitful for God.

The first thing we all need to get straight is that the world around us is NOT our responsibility. You are not solely accountable for the starving millions in this world. You are not answerable to a bereaved family if someone you have prayed for has died. The onus is not on you to put right all the traumas and quandaries that fill our families, our newspapers and our television screens. Yes, you should do all you can to care for, pray for and help those around you; but that is very different to taking on the cares and responsibilities of this world. This world we live in is GOD'S world. He wants His church to become His Helpmeet in confronting all these problems, but He doesn't want us to over-burden ourselves by taking on what is His responsibility. If you find yourself feeling under condemnation about all the troubles around you, then pull yourself up short, and remember that you are only a CHILD of God, you are not God yourself.

When I was a little girl during and just after the War, my Mum went to dressmaking classes to make the clothes we could not buy. During my school holidays I went with her, and was allowed to use up scraps of material to make tiny clothes for my dolls. I was not allowed simply to 'play' with the material, it was too precious. If I wanted to sew, then my mother insisted I learned properly. My little dolls dresses were as carefully and neatly sewn as the dresses my Mum made for me. There were times, though, when I got myself in a terrible muddle. Nothing seemed to go right. I became tired and angry. The screwed up half-finished dresses that I threw down in frustration were taken up by my Mum and put right so that I could begin that seam again.

I like to think that my prayer-relationship with Jesus is along the same lines as my sewing times with my Mum. The Bible teaches us that Jesus has been making INTERCESSION for us for at least two thousand years! That's a clear indication that He is really good at it! In fact He is the Master Intercessor. In many ways He doesn't need my intercession, He is quite capable of running this world without any input from me. It's just that He wants me to learn skills that I can never learn without practising them, so He invites me to become an Intercessor alongside Him. It's as though I am learning to pray by being allowed to practice on little bits of insight that He gives me day by day. The wonderful thing is that if I make a terrible muddle of my prayer-time I need not get frustrated and 'down in the mouth', He can come alongside and take up what I have spoiled and turn chaos into order. What pleases Him is the fact that I really want to pray in partnership with Him. Times of intercession can become times when I get to know Jesus in ways I could never do otherwise.

The real problems happen when I have prayed deeply and sincerely for some very worrying situation and God does not seem to answer. I have 'done' all the 'correct' things. I have confessed my sin first, I have praised God, and I have tried to get my own personal feelings out of the way. I have really believed that God would heal or mend the broken relationship or whatever my prayer was about; but nothing happens! Why? What went wrong? Is God really there?

I believe that this happens because there are two sides to Intercession, and we only 'see' one. One side is the result of our Prayertime (that is – the answers to our prayers), and this is the side that we concentrate on. The other side is the discipline of learning to be an intercessor, (that is – me becoming a Child of God, who has dominion over the circumstances surrounding me, just as God gave dominion to Adam when humanity was first created). We tend to concentrate on the need we have for answers; maybe we ought to think more about why God has asked us to pray in the first place. In the book of Genesis it says, *"God blessed them (Adam and Eve) and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground'"*. You see, we were created to have dominion over our circumstances and the world around, us, but, because of SIN, we no longer have that. God wants to see us learning to "subdue" this world as He first intended us to do. As we partner God in prayer we are being taught to take back that which SIN has taken from us.

Do you remember the life that Jesus of Nazareth lived here on earth? His was a life of real 'dominion'. Nothing phased Him. Nothing blocked His prayer life. When He prayed He always knew that God would give Him the "YES" answer. Why did He know that? Because He was always in partnership with His Father! He was always obedient to the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. He moved and prayed in obedience to the still small voice of His indwelling Lord. Yes, but He was the Son of God, wasn't He, so that made all the difference! Well No! Actually that should make no real difference because we are told that; *"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."* (Romans 8 v 25).

And 1 Corinthians verse 16b reads, *"But we have the mind of Christ"*! So then, if we have the Holy Spirit helping and interceding for us, and we can also have the same mind as Christ Jesus, AND He too is forever interceding for us, surely then our prayer life ought ultimately to be as fruitful as Jesus' was. Sounds good, but it doesn't always work that way.

The truth is that we are still only learning how to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we are still only learning how to "put on the mind of Christ". We are still only in that place that I was, during the war, when my Mum was teaching me to sew. We are still tacking and pinning the pieces together, we haven't yet got on to real seaming and hemming. But that will come!!

I truly believe that within the world-wide church of Jesus Christ we put too much emphasis on having miraculous answers to prayer, and not enough on the solid business of learning how to pray. Let's begin to take note of how we have prayed, why we have prayed as we have, what made us believe that God was speaking. Let's quite literally, take notes; just as if we were learning a new language. Let's systematically go back to the Master so that He can show us where we went wrong. Let's learn to follow after Him, rather than dictate to Him. This is His world and He wants us to learn how to rule and we need to learn by imitation not by blundering through.

So, when things don't go as you expected them to, don't be too disappointed. Remember that you are still a Learner. Think through the process of your Prayertime.

Try to find out what Jesus is teaching you about prayer. Don't be afraid of asking how other people are hearing from Him. Never think that anyone is so far above you spiritually, that they know it all. You would be surprised how frequently Jesus blesses the 'Babes in Christ' with spiritual insight that is denied those who have known Him for years. Let this be writ large on your heart – WE ARE ALL STILL ONLY LEARNING!

So – what are you going to do over the next few weeks?

Continue to use the Lord's Prayer as a pattern for INTERCESSION (see leaflet No. 8), but begin to enlarge on your area and scope of prayer. Use the Church notice sheet to pray continually for all the different activities that go on week after week. Include your reading of the local newspaper in your Prayertime, that way you can pray for local people and their situations. Pray as you watch the News on the television, simply bring each item to Jesus and silently (or out loud if you are alone) talk it over with Him as you watch. Keep a note in your Prayer Journal of those things that have particularly caught your attention, or have caused you to feel a sort of 'burden'; then as you pray watch out for God's answers to your prayers. Those answers may not come in the guise that you might expect them. Be prepared to be surprised, even bemused, as He speaks. Keep an account of how He speaks and what He says, for this is the way to learn in the "school of prayer". Remember – WE ARE ALL STILL ONLY LEARNING, and as you keep a record of your conversations with your Lord so you will begin to progress. Think of yourself as a wide-eyed little child watching and waiting for every little nuance of His voice and for every glance of His eye. He will not disappoint you, because He is more interested in holding your attention than you could ever imagine. Be daily, hourly, every moment, conscious of the Indwelling Lord of your life and you will find that your whole attitude to the world around you will begin to change.

Seek out Scriptures that you can use in your Prayertime. Soaking yourself in the Word of God is the means that He has given us to get to know Him better. Try to memorise those texts that have come to mean a lot to you, write them out and pop them into your pocket so that you can read them again and again in odd moments during the day. JUST KEEP ON LEARNING.

Step ten (a)

This is **PART ONE** of the last subject in this Prayer Leaflet series, and as Spiritual Warfare is such a complex and controversial subject, I shall only touch on it here. It has also been proposed that we have some proper teaching on this subject at a later date at W.B.C. so that is something to be looking out for.

What is Spiritual Warfare? Simply put, it is the normal "walk" of a Child of God. Each and everyone of us takes part in Spiritual Warfare each and every day of our lives. As Children of God we are, quite naturally, at enmity with the great Enemy of our God and Father in Heaven. If we do not want to fight that enemy (the devil), then he will most assuredly take the opportunity to oppose and destroy our relationship with God. Peter teaches us to: -

*"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil **prowls around** like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, ..."*(1 Peter 5:8)

"But", you might say, "I've heard people say that Spiritual Warfare is the rather flamboyant sort of prayer that casts out demons and does strange exorcisms. Isn't that true?" Well, of course, it sometimes does mean that God wants us to oppose Satan in that manner, but most of the time Spiritual Warfare is fought within our own personalities. I believe that we have no right to get involved with that so-called "flamboyant" kind of praying until we have had at least some worthwhile victory within our own personalities. How can we expect to command powerful spiritual forces to leave a situation when we are harbouring them within our own lives? No, true Spiritual Warfare, like most things, begins AT HOME!

In Matthew chapter 16 v 24 Jesus said,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and **follow me.**"

Here is Spiritual Warfare in a nutshell! To be a disciple of Jesus we must "deny" ourselves – that means putting all our own wants and longings to one side; "take up our cross" - and that means accepting the kind of life that God wants us to live, accepting any limitations He puts on our pleasures or fancies, accepting any kind of pain, suffering or loss simply because He deems it right for the extension of His Kingdom. Denying ourselves and taking up our cross is tantamount to accepting the words that Jesus said in the following verse:-

" For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

Spiritual Warfare starts deep within our own hearts, minds and spirits. Our primary Warfare is against our 'SELF'.

"Seven Spiritual Principals of the Kingdom of God."

Here are my personal Seven Spiritual Principals that I believe constitute the beginnings of Spiritual Warfare: -

1. If there is anything you need, begin by giving it away.

Do you need love? Begin by learning to love others, then they will soon respond with love. Do you need people to be patient with you? Begin by being extra patient with them. Whatever you think you need, begin by giving away the very thing you ache for, and just watch the response from those around you.

2. You can never change anyone else, you must always change yourself.

This is a toughy! How many of us can see the faults in our spouses or those people close to us, and long to 'put them right'? Jesus teaches that we must first get rid of the plank in our own eyes before we start poking at the tiny speck in their eyes. Your prayer, in this situation, needs to be "Lord, please change ME!"

3. If you want to rule in the Kingdom, you must learn to wash feet.

Jesus always taught that it is those who SERVE who please Him the most. "Washing feet" is a picture of really caring for one another, watching to see whether someone is needing comfort, help or just a kindly smile. It is being a comfort – making others comfortable possibly at our own expense. The "doorkeeper" or "foot washer" was the lowliest slave in Bible times. It was his job to sit in the doorway and wash off the muck from the feet of visitors. No-one liked this job, because feet became encrusted with all sorts of nasty things. Remember, domestic animals roamed free, and not just within the homes of the poor. Pooh! The Psalmist said:-

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. (Psalm 84 verse 10)

We need to be able to say exactly the same!

4. Your gifting and your 'ministry' must be relinquished to Jesus – all ministry is His and only His.

Jesus said that even He could do nothing unless it was given to Him from the Father. The truth is that you and I are simply not pure nor sinless like Jesus, therefore everything we do is tainted. When Jesus gives us a job to do, or a 'ministry' to live out then we need to immediately give it back into His care, seeking that He should fulfil that 'ministry' in us, rather than that we should attempt it ourselves. Then we will never be jealous or hurt if someone else wants our job or ministry. Relinquishment is one of the most important concepts of Christian living – and one of the most painful.

5. To qualify for God's "friendship" and His giving you "anything you ask", you must learn to be a "door mat". (John 15)

Read John 15. Here you will find Jesus' famous saying that we must "lay down our lives for our friends". When the Greek text says "lay down" it gives us a picture of rolling out a carpet. If we "roll out our lives like a carpet" then we must expect other people to walk all over them. After all, that's what carpets are for! In this chapter Jesus tells us that this "laying down of our lives" is the prerequisite for true "friendship" with God. So – if we want to get really close to God, and to clearly hear His voice, then we need to be obedient to Him. Now – I know that there are very bad connotations to "being a door mat". We see this as being down-trodden, being a sort of cowering wretch. That's not what is meant here. We are to be prepared to be the one who gives way, if that should benefit the Kingdom of God. We are to be ready to be misunderstood, to be reviled, rejected, hurt and abused, if that should benefit the Kingdom of Heaven. After all isn't that exactly what Jesus did when He was brought before the Sanhedrin and Pilate?

Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 6 v. 7: -

"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers."

Are we prepared to be "wronged" or "cheated" rather than cause quarrels?

6. All hurt, anger and negative attitudes must be sacrificed to Jesus at the very moment it costs you the most.

Do you realise that the only thing that Jesus really wants from us is our SIN? All our goodness and kindness, all our righteous deeds are still only "filthy rags" in His sight. Everything that I possess that is good and clean has come as a gift from Jesus. If I give Him any of that I am only giving Him back His own. But – if I am prepared to give Him my bad temper, just when it is at boiling point, then I have really given Him something that has cost me! If I am prepared to give Him my unforgiving heart when someone has caused me harm, then my preparedness to forgive is of value simply to the amount it has cost me to forgive. If I wait until it is easy for me to calm down, or to forgive, then my "love-gift" to Jesus is of less value. Strangely we love to give Him the "nice" things about ourselves, but we tend to hang on desperately to our sins, even though these are what He truly wants us to give up.

7. Your purpose for living is to give pleasure to your Lord, NOT to work for Him.

This sums up all of our "Spiritual Principals". We are "not our own, we are bought with a price". We were created to give God pleasure.

*"He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his **pleasure** and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."* Eph. 1:5

If it gives Him pleasure for us to do a particular job, then of course we will work for Him with all our might. But, first we must learn what is exactly His good pleasure for our particular life. What does Jesus want from me TODAY! How can I please Him TODAY! Very possibly the greatest way I can give Him pleasure is to learn to live according to His good and perfect Will, and that will entail the most strident personal Spiritual Warfare. SPIRITUAL WARFARE begins within my life. Here, within my heart, I fight my most bloody battles. Here inside my sinful nature I seek out and demolish Satan's strongholds. And, believe me, these battles are the ones that will last my whole life-time, and if I am never victorious here, then I can never fight for anyone else.

Step ten (b)

Last time we touched on Spiritual Warfare in relation to our SELVES. Let's now move on to Warfare fought on behalf of situations and circumstances in our own lives, and indeed in the lives of other people. Before we go too far, though, we need to emphasise the purpose of Spiritual Warfare, and indeed any kind of ministry. The following comes from a book on Spiritual Warfare: -

I do not believe that we should see spiritual warfare as an end in itself. In a valid sense, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (see 1 John 3:8), but this was only a means toward the end of seeking and saving that which was lost (see Luke 19:10). Jesus mainly wanted to draw human beings back into fellowship with the Father and He was willing to die on the cross so it could be possible. His focus was on people, and the devil was simply one of those obstacles, albeit the most formidable one, standing in the way of human redemption. I see the heart of God as so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son. For what reason? So that all who believe on Him should not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). God's highest priority is evangelism, calling out a people who will honor and glorify His name. This is my highest priority as well. I have given over 35 years of active ministry to missions, evangelism and church growth. If I have 10 more years to serve God, I want them to make a difference in the number of souls that are saved around the world. My interest in warfare prayer is directly proportional to its effectiveness in enhancing evangelism.

From Warfare Prayer © 1992 by C. Peter Wagner.

So, we need to understand that Spiritual Warfare is NOT some kind of super prayer. It is not only for those who are 'spiritual giants' (if there ever was such a thing). It is simply a prayer technique that assists the Church to remove obstacles that would hinder the greater business of evangelism.

Powerless, Prayerless and Purposeless

The Church has the answer! The answer is the presence and power of God expressed through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. But many in the Church seek His presents rather than His presence. They seek the power of God rather than relationship with the God of power. The Church is generally powerless. We can no longer say, as Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). When the world needs us most, sin, division and faithlessness have left us impotent.

We are unable to do the works Jesus did, let alone the greater things He claimed we would and could do. He told us that "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). So why aren't we doing them?

The apostle Paul could say, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Cor. 2:4). Yet, we must pitifully beg the world to believe us for our word's sake. We aren't doing His works because many believers are too out of touch with God to allow the Spirit to display His power!

Perhaps the Church's strength is its own greatest weakness. Refined and rigid, the Church has assessed, prioritized, planned and prayed with superficial consideration for God to bless its plan. Strangely, we have overlooked a powerful key to the ministry of Jesus, who said, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19). Jesus had power for ministry because He had an intimate relationship with the Father. We must discover what is on God's heart and join Him! Only by praying intimately are we able to discover what He is doing. "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants" (Amos 3:7, NKJV).

Our powerlessness is largely a result of our prayerlessness. We are eating the bitter fruit of prayerlessness and our children, government, churches and society

are reaping the result of dry eyes in the pews and crusty hearts in the pulpits.
From Beyond the Veil © by Alice Smith.

Ephesians chapter 6 v 10 ff f: -

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

This portion of Scripture has always been the beginning place of Spiritual Warfare. Any soldier who goes into battle looks to his own protection before he begins to fight the enemy. For us it is no different. We need to understand what God has given us for our protection before we even begin to think about this kind of prayer. Read these verses over and over, seeking Jesus' explanation of all that they mean. You will very quickly find that it is Jesus Himself Who is our true armour. Jesus is the TRUTH, He is our RIGHTEOUSNESS, it is His GOSPEL OF PEACE we proclaim, and it is FAITH in Him that is our shield. Jesus is also our SALVATION and the WORD OF GOD. So, relationship and closeness to Jesus our Lord and Saviour is the greatest priority when learning the prayer of Warfare.

From then on we need to seek His Will and Purposes for those we pray for. We need to understand that we are not fighting battles that we have initiated, but we fight under orders from the Lord of Hosts. It is also essential to gain clear insight into who and what we are fighting. We may know and trust our God, but it is also necessary to 'know' our enemy. Again, Bible study and prayer is the way forward.

There are many books that have been written about this kind of praying, and as they take up many pages, it is impossible for me to make any positive contribution here. I can, though, suggest a few titles that you might like to read. The two books I have quoted from are a good start. There is also, "I believe in Satan's Downfall" by Michael Green. "Mighty Prevailing Prayer" by Wesley L. Duewel. "Into Battle" by Arthur Wallis, and "Spiritual Warfare" by Derek Prince. There are many, many more; and if you would like to contact me I can tell you a little more about these books.

Spiritual Warfare is simply taking hold of all that God has provided for His people, and using that power and authority to over-throw Satan's attempts to thwart God's plans. This is a prayer exercise that should not be attempted on your own. Jesus sent His disciples out two by two when they learned that "even the demons" obeyed them. We would be foolish to try to do more than they did.

If you have begun to take prayer as a real and active priority in your life, then you will already have started Warfare. If you have been interceding for friends and family, if you pray regularly and aggressively for our church and the world around us, then you have already started Warfare. If you find that you want to go further in your prayertime for those around you, then watch out for the teaching that Alan is planning on Spiritual Warfare for all of us at Willesborough Baptist Church.

Fighting Satan and his demons might seem like a very scary thing to attempt. But, let's face it, we are doing that all the time within our own lives. Learning to face up to the devil and his followers in a more overt way can prove very disturbing; but Jesus is

our Captain, Jesus is Lord and King over even the demonic realm, so let us not back away from any situation simply because it gives us 'Goosebumps'. Jesus said that He has given His followers power over all the schemes of the Enemy. We need, as a church, to take hold of that power and use it to clear a pathway for our God and King. 2 Timothy chapter 1 v 7 reads: -

*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a **spirit of power**, of love and of self-discipline.*

Write this text on your heart. Memorise it. Take its message deep into your spirit. You do NOT have to be afraid, for our God has given you a SPIRIT OF POWER, OF LOVE and of SELF-DISCIPLINE. May we use what He has given us, to the greater glory of His precious Name.

(This leaflet ends our series "Climbing the Peak of Prayer". If I can ever be of any help to anyone, please feel free to contact me. May God bless you and multiply your love, power and self-discipline for His service.)