



PRAYER BOOKS BY JOHN DEVRIES **(Founder of Mission India)**

Available from Mission India: books@missionindia.com or 877/644-6342
or Mission India PO Box 141312, Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

Why Pray?

It is impossible to separate prayer and cells. These two ingredients are immediate, unlearned, culturally dictated responses to the gospel which are inseparable. Western Christians who, for the most part, have relegated prayer to one of the lesser priorities of the Christian life certainly need to learn more about the nature of prayer. Congregations are using this book with significant success as a special, forty-day period of prayer, seeking God's direction for outreach. The book, "Why Pray?" combines teaching about prayer and cells as it concludes with a challenge to begin prayer in small groups in families, the most natural of all places for group prayer.

The first week of the devotional provides answers to the question, "Why Pray?" The first answer points out that prayer is a love relationship with God and when we evaluate it merely in terms of what we get out of it we prostitute that relationship. We do not evaluate a conversation with our spouse on the basis of what we get from it. We do not keep a journal recording what we "got" out of the last conversation and on that basis determine whether the conversation was worth our time to talk. Marriages would not last long and a relationship with the Creator and Savior is also ill fated with that approach.

Second, prayer is more than words. It is a child like relationship of trust. As we go through the day "sitting on the Father's lap", trusting him as a little child trusts parents, we are praying. Prayer is like fueling the car. A person pushing a car with an empty gas tank past a service station because he has no time to stop is like a person who has no time to pray! Prayer is holding God's hand; it is traveling with God enjoying the scenery of life. But most of all prayer is the work. Christ was able to stand in Pilate's judgment hall and endure the agony of the cross because he did the "work" of prayer in sweating drops of blood in the garden. Western Christians need to understand that prayer is not an after thought, but it is God's divine, appointed way of ruling the universe through us.

The second week is devoted to the place of prayer; is it first or last? Are we to plan and then ask God to bless our plans or are we to pray first and ask God to show us his plans because those plans are already blessed? We are given two spiritual legs; the leg of prayer and the leg of work. We are to walk on them in step with Christ. Our Savior calls this taking "his yoke" on us. Two oxen yoked together, must be instep with each other or they fall. Hence it is important to know which foot Christ puts first, the foot of prayer or the foot of work.

Next, during the third week, we address the subject of praying for our neighbors pointing out the dramatic change that occurs in a neighborhood, classroom, or workplace when through praying together we concentrate our requests on a specific area. In India a group of untouchables directed their prayers to the Brahmin

community, knowing that because of caste differences they could never witness to this community. God answered those prayers in a most amazing way, resulting in a new church springing up in the Brahmin community. Western Christians need to be reassured of God's transforming power over specific communities as a direct answer to targeting those areas in prayer cells.

The fourth week is devoted to praying through the Lord's Prayer for our neighbors – learning how to pray for the hallowing of God's name in the families living around us and to ask for the coming of his kingdom and the doing of his will. The final section of this little book is devoted to suggestions about making our home a **home of prayer everyday** (H.O.P.E.) thus bringing hope to our neighbors. Renewing family devotions and regularly praying for our unsaved friends is the first step toward forming prayer cells.

The New You...

The second important link in building strong cells is confident, victorious identity based on Christ's indwelling presence. Often called the "mystical union", the teaching of Christ in us is the most frequently referred to truth in the New Testament, appearing over 160 times and culminating in the establishment of the Lord's Supper. Paul states "I was crucified with Christ and I died and Christ now lives in me." Galatians 2:20. New disciples in the developing world seem to have a much easier time understanding their authority over the demonic world due to the indwelling presence of Christ than do western Christians who often struggle with doubts about the very existence of the demonic.

This book develops a simple, three part daily prayer to build a new self image. The prayer is in the form of three questions asked of Christ.

- Where are you Lord?
- Who are you Lord?
- What do you want of me today?

As Christians meditate on the answer to "Where are you Lord?" and realize that Christ is not outside of us up in some distant heaven but is actually present in us through his Holy Spirit, they are introduced to a new sense of identity. Christ is the light of the world and that light is not shining down on us but has come to dwell within us to shine out of us. Thus, as we look inside ourselves, we see not failure and sin leading to depression, but we see the Light of the world. We see the beauty and radiance of Christ inside us, longing to shine out of us. The Christian is pictured as a house at twilight, with beautiful warm, yellow light streaming from each window, calling people to come into it.

The second prayer, "Who are you Lord?" leads to a daily meditation on building our identity not through looks, possessions or power, but on the fact that the greatest Person in the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, has taken residence within us (Revelation 3:20). Through an exposition of John 1:1-4 we are reminded of the infinite nature of the One who dwells in us with the result that depression and despair fall away as we realize who we are due to the presence of Christ in us.

The third prayer, "What do you want of me today?" is answered by the thought that since Christ lives in us with all his divine power that power must shine in the light of forgiveness, transformation, the power of prayer and a new concern for giving rather than getting.

The new disciples in the southern and eastern world usually express far more joy, vision, courage and passion than western Christians and this comes from seeing themselves not in terms of material possessions but rather in terms of possessing the King of Kings. They believe the literal truth that “if any person be in Christ they are a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) and as a result “my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19).

This new identity becomes the motivation to spread God’s word. If a person believes in Christ but fails to build a new identity based on the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, that person becomes like a car without gas. It can have the best engine, most wonderful design, but without gas will go nowhere. One of the greatest inhibiting factors to the spread of Christianity in the west is the appalling lack of motivation which comes from the fact that western Christians still see themselves in terms of personal success, material possessions, and power. They have not shifted to a “new self image in Christ.”

“Why Give?”

One of the most popular of Mission India’s books in India is the forty day devotional book called “The Grace of Giving” which will be released in a westernized format in the USA in the fall of 2007. The book begins with the question, “Why Give?” and answers it in two ways. First, the theological answer is that we give because God is a giving God and we are created in his likeness and in his image. The second answer is a more gripping one, however, that God created us to be rivers. Tracing the biblical imagery of a river from Genesis to Ezekiel 47 to John 7:34,35 to Revelation 22:1-4, we see that the skeleton or framework of Scripture is that of giving like a river.

The book points out that we give Christ to the world. It is not the gift of ourselves. We give his life and his death, his resurrection and ascension and coming again as we reveal the mystery of the gospel.

The third part of the book deals with the results of giving in terms of unlocking God’s infinite resources. We do not give in order to get. To stop at that point is to succumb to the heretical prosperity doctrine. We give in order to get in order to give more! This is not only the Old Testament assurance, but more clearly taught in the New Testament especially in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

The fourth part of the book deals with giving with the head as well as the heart, challenging much of the “selfish” giving of the west. This giving is based on the satisfying ones emotions rather than meeting the actual need of the person to whom we give. Head first giving is giving in a focused, accountable, productive, transparent and joyous way. “Head-giving” or giving with our minds is not only the discipline of tithing but it is the “beyond common sense” way of faith promise giving. The book concludes with meditations on the characteristics of generous Christians and a generous church.

“Why Study the Bible?”

This book, currently published in India as “The Bible’s Transforming Truths”, is an LDR Bible study. LDR stands for the three parts of growth in God’s word: Learn it, do it and report it. The western church has become one of the greatest “audit” institutions in the world, seldom asking for significant accountability in practical

application of sermons. Methodism spread like fire across this nation, accounting for some 38,000 congregations still in existence today because the Wesleys insisted that each sermon be implemented in some practical form and members be held accountable during the mid week “class meetings” to report on what they had done with it.

The LDR method approaches each selection of Scripture with three sets of standardized questions.

We learn or grow in head knowledge by asking of a passage:

1. What is the theme or “big idea” of this passage?
2. How can this theme be stated in a question?
3. In what ways does the passage answer the question?

This “head-knowledge” is then transferred to transforming conduct by answering the “do it” section of questions.

1. What do you like in this passage?
2. Is there anything you don’t like or don’t understand?
3. What did you learn about God?
4. In what practical ways will you apply the lessons of this passage to your life?

Finally, before moving on to the next selection at the time of the next meeting, the cell members are called to report on what they have done with the passage.

This approach to Scripture follows the John 4:7 principle of “the greatest favor we can do for someone else is to ask for a favor.” When originally tested in a prison in Illinois among a group of thirty inmates who were prostitutes and drug addicts, the prisoners showed a surprising reaction. When asked, “What do you like in this passage?” there was total silence. No matter how much prompting the leader gave, she was met with stony stillness. Finally one of the inmates crossly replied, “What’s the trick lady? Don’t you know who we are? No one ever asks us what we like. We are prisoners – we are the scum. Who are you trying to fool?” It was only after the leader finally assured them that this was not a trick but a genuine interest in them that they began to discuss what they liked in the passage. As the potential new disciple approaches Scripture it is essential that they feel “needed” as they study and that their opinion has value.

There is a second important aspect to the LDR study method. It teaches us how to listen to God speaking through us through His Word in practical ways for daily living. Unless we wrestle with these questions, and listen for the answers, we miss the most dynamic aspect of Christianity, namely, God speaking to us through His Word and the guidance of the Comforter. When this is absent, Bible study deteriorates to dry head knowledge which ultimately results in divisive, doctrinal arguments.

