

Correcting **Some Misconceptions** **About Prayer**



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Body of Christ
worldwide.

Introduction

Prayer is an activity that is normal and widely practiced everywhere, across different regions and in almost every religion on the face of the earth. Everyone prays. This is because most people believe in a supreme being. Prayer is communicating with a supreme being.

Christians are among the class of people who pray a lot and rightly so. Over the years though, certain misconceptions and ideas have crept into the church, on account of certain misunderstandings of certain bible passages, peoples pre-conceived ideas and also dislike for certain extreme practices.

The more I interact with other Christians, the more I find out that a number of them have certain beliefs about prayer - its role, its significance and how it's to be carried out, which unfortunately, are inaccurate as far as the scriptures are concerned. In this short write-up, I am attempting to shed light on some of the wrong thoughts

and beliefs of people as regarding the subject of prayer
in Christendom.

Wrong Belief No. 1

Being heard by God because of your much speaking

I am not the first to attempt correcting the wrong ideas of people concerning prayer. Jesus is, and in his teaching, he addresses this ideology. So let's go to him and learn.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking

Matthew 6:7

The Pharisees and men of Jesus' day had a certain concept of prayer. They thought that their "right" to be heard by God and for their prayers to be heard and answered hinged on their ability to speak for long, repeating themselves again and again and again. In their minds, once you can repeat and express yourself in different multiplicity of vocabulary and expressions to say the same thing, then you're guaranteed a hearing by

God. That unfortunately, is not true and Jesus states so clearly.

Jesus says this thinking pattern and style of praying, hinged on the belief that the more you say things in different ways and express yourself articulately with much words, the better you have a chance at being heard by God and he, subsequently answering your petitions, is a gentile way of prayer and not accurate. In other words, that belief is not true. You can pray for so long, repeating yourself severally and using big vocabulary and it may amount to nothing.

Jesus says, “talking plenty and being dexterous with words” is not why God hears a person in prayer. In other words, *prayer is much more than uttering words*. Words are key in prayer (because they are a communicative tool by which we transmit our thoughts, and emotions) but prayer is not mere speaking and saying so many things. That in no way invalidates praying for long – not at all. What Jesus is addressing is a wrong belief system that sponsors an action, not the length of time in prayer because Jesus at one time spent at least nine hours in

prayer on a mountain. The Bible records that he prayed all night. (Luke 6:12)

The first wrong thing people believe about prayer which Jesus addressed is that being heard by God in prayer is not dependent on being dexterous with vocabulary and repeating yourself again and again, howbeit in different styles of expression. NO.

That mindset and attitude is proof of doubt and unbelief. That is, if you believe and know that God heard you when you prayed, then why repeat it again and again? Certainly, this falls under the prayer of faith (there are different kinds of prayer and different rules of engagement for each – that’s for another day). You can get Pastor Chris Oyakhilome’s book on *How to pray effectively volume 1*, for more on that subject. In faith, we have the evidence for what we are asking the Lord for, on account of the Word of God.

So, if “much speaking” is not why God hears a person in prayer, then what guarantees it? Valid question. Let’s answer it.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

1 John 5:14-15

According to Apostle John, God hears us when we ask him *according to his will*. That is, what guarantees we having a hearing with God (hearing and doing are not the same thing) is that whatever our prayer is, it's in line with his will. That is, it can be found within the confines of what God wants. Obviously, that shows us something.

1. God only responds to his will and counsel
2. Whatever God does, he does for the purpose of fulfilling and furthering his will.

Thus, if your prayer falls outside the scope of his will (general or specific), then he doesn't even hear it, talk less of do it. Ephesians 1:5-9 reveals to us that what God does, he does according to the good pleasure of his will.

You may wonder, what is God's will? God's Word is his will and the Bible is his written Word to mankind.

Just as you cannot stand before a court of judicial justice in Ghana (my country) to claim right to trading in cocaine (because its forbidden to engage in such per the constitution of the land), in the same vein, any prayer you pray outside of the allowable scope of God's Word cannot be heard. Like the cocaine dealer, you're putting yourself at risk to even dare go to court with such a matter because you're already in violation of the law to begin with. There's no hearing your arguments. Hope you get that?

So, in God's administration, your prayer obtains a hearing because it's within the scope of his will, not because you repeated yourself or prayed so much or are dexterous in your use of language to deliver your petition. No. You're not heard because of your much speaking and that's what Jesus says.

Wrong belief No. 2

*That prayer must be indoors – no one
should hear you when you pray.*

This belief is only partly true and amazingly it does more harm than good. In attempting to follow what Jesus said, some people, having not understood the import and truth that Jesus was communicating, have a twisted view of this subject as regards prayer?

Before we delve into the context of what Jesus said, to fully understand it, let me give you a few clear facts of scripture that do not support this half-truth.

- ❖ Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises in prison and the prisoners heard them

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Acts 16:25

- ❖ Jesus' prayers were heard by his disciples and those close to him, even to the extent that the contents of his praying was recorded. The entire chapter of John 17 is a record of Jesus' prayers to the father before he went to the cross. (Matthew 11:25, Luke 10:21)

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me

John 11:41

- ❖ Jesus prayed at different places.
 - The wilderness (Matthew 4:1-2)
 - Lazarus grave, before a host of people (John 11:41)
 - On the cross (Luke 23: 34, 46)
- ❖ In Hebrews 5:7, the Bible says because Jesus feared, he prayed loudly. A reference to his prayer at the garden of gethsemane

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.

Hebrews 5:7

The facts of scripture reveal something different from what some people think Jesus said and meant. Let's now investigate what Jesus said and meant.

TAKE HEED that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven. 2. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4. That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. 5. And when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love

to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 6:1-6

Did you notice the underlined words? Jesus is teaching his disciples and says to them, that they should not be like the Pharisees (in their giving, fasting and prayers). That is, there is something wrong in how the Pharisees do the things they do, not what they do. If we say that what they did was what was wrong, then we mean alms giving, fasting and prayers would be wrong but no, we don't throw away the baby with the bath water. That's unhealthy and a bad practice which has led many into extremities in terms of Bible study and teachings. Giving, fasting and prayers are good things and the bible is clear about that. The problem is something the

Pharisees were doing with these good things.
Understood?

Now let's go to the opening verse where Jesus begins his discourse to see what he wanted to draw the disciples' attention to.

He says, take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ...

Matthew 6:1

So Jesus is cautioning his disciples against an attitude. What attitude is that? **Doing things for the sole purpose of receiving applause and praise from men.**

In the opening verse, Jesus says, when you do alms, don't do it with the aim that men will see and applaud. He says that's a wrong way to do alms. What's Jesus addressing? *Intention, motives, purposes. Why you do what you do.* It is this attitude Jesus says the Pharisees have. Let's repeat verse 2 and 5

2. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

5. And when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

Verse 2 and 5

Hope you can see that? The Pharisees did what they did just so that

1. Men will see
2. Men will applaud

And Jesus says that's wrong. It is a hypocritical behaviour; an attitude of dishonesty. According to Jesus, that is a wrong way of doing things in the Kingdom of God (prayer in context here). In other words, we don't pray with the motive that men will see

us, hail us and applaud us. No. we don't do that. That's not why we pray!

Did you notice why the Pharisees prayed in the open synagogues and in the corners of the street? *That they may be seen of men.* In other words, their motive of wanting to be seen of men is what informed and sponsored their finding strategic corners of the streets to pray. It's not their action necessarily which is wrong. It is their motives which then sponsors their actions in doing what they did. That is, if they didn't want to be seen and applauded by men, chances are they probably would not have chosen strategic corners of the streets as their prayer venues. It is a **motive-sponsored action.**

Now, there could be someone who prayed in the open synagogue who isn't motivated by men seeing him. He may simply be burdened to pray and the best place he could find per time was the open synagogue. That doesn't mean that he's doing it to be seen. We have to distinguish that and see the difference. What Jesus is addressing is a *motive-sponsored action* of praying to have praise of men. That's what is wrong.

What's Jesus recommendation? Find a room and pray secretly to your father. Secret prayer does not mean no one hears you. You could be heard because Jesus prayed apart by himself in the garden of Gethsemane and yet he prayed with loud crying and the disciples heard him. (Matthew 26:36-39)

Conversely, someone can also shut the door and pray, screaming on top of his voice and really, although the person chose to pray in the room and not in a garden, you can deduce that his intent for praying is so that everybody in the neighborhood will know that he's the prayer papa.

So you see, it runs both ways, whether locking yourself in a room or being outside in the open. You can have the wrong character for praying – that men may see you and applaud and that attitude is what Jesus wants us to guard against.

Now let's answer the question of praying in secret. What does it mean? Praying in secret is praying without the motive that men may see you and applaud you.

That's all. Praying in secret is Jesus' recommendation for overcoming the attitude of praying that men may see and applaud right?

In essence, when Jesus said to pray in secret, having locked your door, he meant praying sponsored by the right motive-action, which is, that men may not see, be happy about and applaud but rather that the father may see, be pleased about and applaud. The motive focus of the praying action is what the issue is.

Hope it's clear?

Wrong belief No. 3

That when you speak in tongues, it must be understood and interpreted.

This is also a half truth. On the subject of speaking in tongues, many are yet to understand that there are different tongues. Because a number of people don't know this, they put all tongues into one box and that's wrong. According to the Bible there is

1. Unknown tongues or new tongues
2. Diverse kinds of tongues

These are not the same. Let's distinguish them.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues

Mark 16:17

Unknown tongues is tongues that is a sign that follows all believers. That is, every Christian has access to this after their born again experience. This tongues is the initial outward evidence of one having received the

Holy Spirit baptism and every Christian can speak in it. It is what is generally called “prayer tongues”.

Diverse kinds of tongues however, is tongues which is a gift of the Spirit which he gives out to Christians at his will. Not every Christian has this gift for the simple reason that it’s under the office and jurisdiction of the Holy Spirit to give to whom he so desires. Whereas with the unknown tongues, one can operate it at will, the same is not true in the area of the diverse kinds of tongues.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

To another the working of miracles; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will.

1 Corinthians 12:7, 10-11

This diverse kinds of tongues is what necessitates the next gift of the interpretation of tongues. That is, when by the Spirit, a person speaks this kind of tongues, interpretation is needed by which the church may be edified. The simple gift of unknown tongues does not require interpretation. Yeah

Follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

1 Corinthians 14: 1-2

Apostle Paul deals with classes of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. The inability of some to distinguish these two kinds of tongues is why they assert by misunderstanding of scripture that when tongues is spoken, it should be understood and or interpreted.

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

1 Corinthians 14:2

Did you notice that? No one understands when a person speaks in an unknown tongue. Why? The tongue is not spoken unto men but unto God and therefore requires no interpretation. This is unknown tongues of Mark 16:17

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. 28. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. 29. Let the prophets speak two or three and let the other judge. 30. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. 31. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted.

1 Corinthians 14:27-38

This scripture here refers to the gift of diverse kinds of tongues in operation in the church under the influence of the Spirit and requires interpretation. Notice what he says in verse 30. *If anything be revealed*. This tongues is a revelation from God to the church and thus requires that it be interpreted so the church would benefit from the utterance given by the Spirit in tongues. Is that clear?

Okay, for the avoidance of doubt, let's summarize these two classes of tongues in a table form.

Unknown tongues	Diverse kinds of tongues
Spoken by men unto God	Spoken unto men
No man understands you	Someone in the church understands
For personal edification, exhortation and comfort	For edification, exhortation and comfort of the church
Operated by ones will	Operated by the influence of the Spirit
Available to all born again Christians	Available to some Christians whom the spirit wills to manifest through

I hope the table clarifies the differences and by it corrects the wrong belief that once tongues is spoken, it has to be interpreted.

Wrong Belief No. 4

***That if you don't speak in tongues,
then you're not a genuine Christian***

I'm sure you already have some information on how and why this belief is unfounded in the Word of God. Believing the gospel of Jesus and accepting the Lordship of Christ by which a person becomes a Christian is one thing and receiving the Holy Spirit by which a person is energized by the Spirit to speak in an unknown tongues is likewise another thing. (I address this subject more in my book, *The Milk of God's Word*.)

Suffice to say that speaking in tongues is an offshoot of the infilling of the Holy Spirit in a Christian. That is, it's only one who is a Christian who enjoys the blessing of the infilling of the Holy Spirit by which he speaks in tongues. According to Jesus, this is available to all believers but some may not access or take advantage of it. This is what Jesus says

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Mark 16:15-17

Notice carefully the order

1. Preach the gospel to every creature
2. Those who hear and believe the gospel you preached to them become saved
3. These signs shall follow the people whom you've preached to and have believed the gospel by which they have become saved. One of such signs is the ability to speak with new tongues.

Hope you can see it? You first become a Christian before you can speak in tongues. Your salvation is not dependent on whether you speak in tongues or not. No! Your salvation is hinged on the fact that you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, believed it and

confessed Christ as Lord of your life. That's what saves you. The proof that you're saved (a Christian) is that you believed and received the message of Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection and by that, God, via his Spirit, came to tabernacle in your heart and gave you eternal life.

Speaking in tongues or not speaking in tongues is a secondary matter that relates to Christians after you're saved (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 10:8-10)

Obviously, you're cheating yourself out if as a Christian you don't speak in tongues but hey, speaking in tongues or not is no guarantee for your salvation. No! The witness of the Spirit in your heart is!

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Fathr.

16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Romans 8:14-16

Wrong Belief No. 5

***That if you pray at a secluded place,
you're better off than one who doesn't.***

This belief about prayer is unfounded in the Word of God. Where a person prays does not make them better than another person. It simply makes them privileged.

In Ghana for instance, there are prayer grounds. Example, Achimota forest, Science gardens, Atwea mountains, Krobo Odumase prayer camp. These places have been designated *places of prayer* and thus many flock there to pray and that's a good thing. The deception is to think that if one goes to such places to pray, they are better than the average person who doesn't go there to pray.

Obviously, because such places are separated unto prayer activities, there is a high propensity that one may have an experience or spiritual encounter "much quicker" than the "normal" place of prayer. This is simply because of the constant activity of prayer taking place there that has designated the place as an altar by which spirits traffic more. Such exists in the Bible.

Jacob, in all his travels, did not encounter angels until he was at Bethel. Bethel was a geographical place on earth where spirit activity in that region was high and therefore it was easy to be caught up in that experience. Nonetheless though, it doesn't make Jacob better. No! He is rather privileged.

This thing is a matter of faith. Whereas many people have been to secluded places of prayer and have received encounters and speedy answers to their prayers, there have likewise been many who have been to such and came back "empty", sometimes "worse" than when they hadn't visited such places. It's a faith matter.

You see, Jesus, while on earth, was the hub of the Godhead.

**For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead
bodily.**

Colossians 2:9

In Mark chapter six, a woman with an issue of blood touched him in faith and got healed and cleansed instantly of her twelve years of hemorrhage. At the same time, Jesus' disciples and the multitude were touching him constantly over the course of the same journey and got nothing. This same Jesus, the headquarters of God, was arrested by soldiers, beaten, made to carry a cross and crucified thereon. The soldiers who gave him such wicked treatment were all the while touching and interacting with the power of God that could change their lives forever, yet they got nothing. They rather "destroyed" him. Malchus, who came with the soldiers to arrest Jesus received a most amazing miracle (his ears which was cut off by Peter was restored perfectly by Jesus – Matthew 18:10, Luke 22: 50-51) All these didn't make any difference to the soldiers. They still killed him. How? Why?

It's a faith issue. Hope you can see it? You can stay in your room and have strange encounters (the dynamics of such is a subject for another day) Likewise, you can go to a secluded place and have strange encounters. The

one who goes to a specific location to pray is no better than the one who does not and vice versa. You simply have to know the benefits of such and exploit the various avenues of encounters in the Kingdom. You are privileged, not better. You see, this thing is primarily a faith issue plus other factors (that we cannot discuss in this write up) Suffice to say though that it's not the location that really defines you but rather you defining the location.

Wrong Belief No. 6

Prayer is all you need to settle all matters

In the kingdom of God, there are different keys that unlock different doors and all these keys are complementary. Certain doors can be accessed by using just one key. Others require a combination of keys to access them. Prayer is not the master key, nonetheless, prayer can be said to be the handle that holds the rest of the keys and allows for direction in knowing which ones to use at what points in time.

People wrongly think that prayer solves every issue and unfortunately that's not true. You just have to be a grown human being to know that. Was it prayer that made you pass your high school exams? Obviously, prayer was an integral part in that equation but majorly, it was studying your books, going to the exams hall at the right time, following the instructions given and answering correctly the questions given that did it.

Prayer is very important in this life. If you are a human being, then one of the things you do in keeping with

being human is prayer. No two ways about that. (Get more in my book, *Are you a Man?*)

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint;

Luke 18:1

In as much as prayer is extremely important and we try to communicate that truth, you need to understand that in this life, prayer does not do everything. There are some matters that you have to pray little and take more action on. Example. Settling a physical conflict, studying your books, travelling to visit your family, sending money to your parents to take care of them.

If, for example, you're supposed to be studying to defend your thesis as a master student and you spend all your time on the field praying, I'm sorry but you'd fail. The prayer will not do the research, typing, binding, presentation and defense for you,

You see, life is never about one single thing. It's complementary and a combination of different things, working together that produces systems that allows for

everything to work and this is something we have to understand. It's not all prayer and neither is it all Bible study. It's not all about sowing seeds and neither is it all about work or making money either. Respect is in the equation too. Diligence is in there too. Romance is part too.

You see, I can end here right? Prayer is not all you need to settle all matters. It's a key but it's not all. If by this you don't pray too, then you haven't understood the subject. Go back and read it again.

Wrong Belief No. 7

*Prayer is a means to manipulate God
to do your bidding.*

This belief is quite funny. It's those who don't know God who think like this. Many may not affirm this but their actions in prayer betrays them.

You've got to understand who God is. He is King and Lord and he does what he wants. He cannot be manipulated and prayer is not a platform by which God does our bidding. No!

**But our God is in the heavens: he hath done
whatsoever he hath pleased.**

Psalm 115:3

Yes, God answers prayer. He created the opportunity for prayer but he did not give us this privilege so we can use it to get our needs met and to command him as though we are the bosses and he, the errand boy. That's not far-fetched. That's actually how some people view God and it's unfortunate.

Hear me. *Prayer is a ministry.* It is a means by which we interact with the divine and by that are sucked into God to become more and more like him and to reflect him. Prayer is a means by which we receive divine energies to do the will of God here on earth and to manifest God to the world. Prayer, like studying the scriptures is more of a transformative tool by which the Holy Spirit works and fulfils the works of God in us and through us in keeping with becoming more like him and properly representing him as his ambassadors.

Prayer changes you! Prayer transforms you. Prayer is an exchange platform where the human life patterns and tendencies, (experientially) gets sucked out and more of the divine life and its operation, fills a person such that they live divinely as they should in this material world. That's what prayer and the platform of prayer is and affords

We pray because we have to pray. It's a part of our service as human beings and Christians. Without prayer, certain legislations and workings of the Kingdom of God cannot take place in this earth realm.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5. And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings and an earthquake.

Revelations 8:3-5

Heaven depends on our prayers as raw materials to spice it up and produce strange happenings in the earth realm in orchestrating it to become a domain just like heaven, where the will of God is prevalent and executed, first hand. That's what prayer is. Prayer is not a selfish ambition and a manipulative tool. No. Absolutely not! Prayer is a ministry we have to fulfil whether we feel like doing it or not. Our fasting, our prayers, our giving CANNOT change and manipulate God. If anything at

all, it “manipulates” us into alignment with God to live out and exercise his will in the earth easily. Trust that clears up the wrong mindset.

I'm glad that by this book, some of the misconceptions about prayer have been cleared up. There are more actually. If I didn't touch on any that you have a question on, feel free and send me a mail, WhatsApp message and I'd be glad to respond. The Lord Bless you.

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3. Single chapter only

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT PACKAGES

Package One – A Blog

- A Blog with a year's hosting
- A blog with three(3) years hosting

Package Two – Portfolio, Church, Business, Organizational websites

- Website with a year's hosting
- Website with three(3) years hosting

Package Three – E-Commerce website

- Website with a year's hosting
- Website with three(3) years hosting

Package Four – Management systems for Schools, Church, Hospitals, Pharmacy etc

- System with a year's hosting
- System with three years hosting

Package Five - Special websites and projects as demanded by the client

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www.tstitagency.com

www.argonhousefilms.com

www.phadconsult.com

www.tedphysiotherapy.com

www.mp.tstitagency.com